

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

by

A. C. HILL



The two dangers of democracy are extreme
inequality and extreme equality.

MONTESQUIEU

A Diplomat should seek for those more
profound realities that sway mankind despite
man's will.

DANIELE VARE

JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON

FIRST PUBLISHED 1945

JONATHAN CAPE LTD. 30 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON
AND 91 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COM-
PLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CITY OF OXFORD
AT THE ALDEN PRESS
BOUND BY A. W. BAIN & CO. LTD., LONDON

CONTENTS

I	THE BACKGROUND	7
II	RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRACY	15
III	THE AGE OF SENTIMENT	25
IV	THE METHOD	31
V	IMPERFECTIONS	39
VI	THE VICTIMS	48
VII	THE GUIDES	53
VIII	THE PERMANENT FACTORS	67
IX	SECURITY	84
X	THE MANAGERS	96
XI	MONOPOLY	109
XII	SOCIAL STRUCTURE	119
XIII	SOCIETY AND THE ARTS	136
XIV	CLASS DIFFERENCES	143
XV	DEMOCRACY ON GUARD	152
XVI	ENDS AND MEANS	163
XVII	BASIC CHANGES	174
XVIII	DIVISION OF POWERS	179
XIX	REMAKING	188
XX	PROSPECTS	200

To
E H
Companion and Guide

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

POLITICS is the conflict resulting from the struggle for power. And power means control, authority over men; control, more or less complete, over the property, the possessions of men. Catiline foments rebellion against the Roman Senate in the hope that he may become master of Rome. Caesar destroys the Republic that he may rule alone in Rome. Borgia tricks his enemies, simulates friendship, plans sieges and battles that he may make himself master of the Italian States. Mirabeau seeks to hold the balance between Court and populace, hoping thus to guide and control the Revolution. Mussolini uses Socialism as the stepping stone to dictatorship, becomes the incarnation of a belated Caesarism. On a defeated Germany, rent by discord and internecine feuds, Hitler builds his civil despotism, the more merciless because he is not of royal but plebeian birth and, with the talents of a statesman, lacks the tolerant mind of the great Frederic.

All these and many others are known as individuals, extraordinary men, but their strength is not only in themselves, but in what they represent, the fears, hopes, ambitions of a class. They are the spearheads of a movement which they lead, by which they are often driven. But the struggle of the classes is still the effort to attain power: the barons against the kings, the great priesthoods against both, the middle classes against the aristocracy, the organized artisans against the manufacturers and financiers and the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. All of them are expressions of the tensions within the social organism, signs therefore of vitality, proofs that the society is not dead, but indications also that the search for power, of the younger against the elder branch,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

the less privileged against the more privileged and the poorer against the richer social classes goes on. And this is politics. It will be disguised by every high sounding name and title, love of humanity, patriotism, justice, fraternity, religion; there is no virtue or grace which may not be called upon to adorn the rather gaunt ungracious figure, either because men are deceived by others or choose to deceive themselves, but always the bony structure remains and beneath every social change sought or accomplished by political effort there lies the truth that politics is the search for power. And the ultimate utterance, the final form, of this search for power, is war.

In every society organized and civilized this power tends to be vested in and represented by money. It is supposed that this is a recent development, that only during the modern and industrial period has money played this part in social life. But this is surely a mistake. The Romans said that he who has the iron can always have the gold, which is probably true, but there was no doubt about the power of the gold. And money has always been valued, save by the miser, who might be regarded as a mental case, as the symbol of power. It enables one to control other men, to purchase their goods, to buy their labour, to hold them more or less in dependence. The possession of money gives men freedom, to the extent of their possessions, from the control of other men; they can remain idle if they wish, can choose what they would work at, how they will spend their time, what social station they will belong to, whom they will have for companions, in a word it gives men a measure of liberty.

That is why politics all over the civilized world is first of all a search for power and then a search for the control of money as the symbol of power. And so long as the form of society remains in any respect like what it has been, so long as men desire things and are able to acquire them through the use of money, whether the money be in cowrie shells,

THE BACKGROUND

iron ingots, precious metals, gems, or scraps of printed paper, this struggle will go on. And when one class or body of persons seems to have secured much of the currency for itself, there will soon be another class which claims a larger portion of the common wealth, since in this way it too will be in possession of power. The more generous or the more subtle minded amongst the people will declare that their purpose is not to acquire the money for themselves but to distribute it to others, as did Caesar when he left his lands and wealth to the poor of Rome, and there will always be a small number who really desire this, having a natural love for justice, or a hatred of inequality. But kings, barons, manufacturers, trade unionists and anarchist leaders are each alike engaged in the struggle to control money, that in this way they may acquire for themselves power, or the promise of power to come. And this is politics all the world over.

Yet along with the conflict for power and for money or the means of creating money, money being the symbol of wealth, there is also the conflict of ideologies, of notions about the way men should be governed. And of these there are two which may be regarded as the main streams, from which smaller streams, variations on the original, may flow. Of the two chief ideas one is government by delegation, the other government by discussion. Assyria, coming down like a wolf on the fold, was an empire governed by delegation, Egypt under the Ptolemies, Sparta in its great days were ruled on the same principle. There was one supreme head, Emperor, Sultan, King, in whom all power was vested, by divine origin, by high birth, by acclamation of the citizens. From him all power descended, through his immediate circle, to the furthest extremities of the Empire, and in theory every official and servant of the State was answerable to him. The other idea of government was that of rule by discussion, by verbal conflicts in the forum, by arts of persuasion directed towards the multitude whose vote would

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

give power for a period to the speaker who won its suffrages. Athens is the classic example of this method of rule.

In our time these two modes of government are again being debated. Germany, Italy and Japan have chosen the method of government by delegation. In each of these countries there is or has been a Tyrannus, Hitler, Mussolini, the Mikado, in whom is vested, in popular imagination or in reality, the source of all authority and power. Against these are arrayed the Allies, in theory devoted to the doctrine of government by discussion. The conflict of ideas is real, it is not in the least new, being one of the oldest of all natural antagonisms, and neither has in itself any particular moral quality. Government by delegation is not in itself wicked, nor is government by discussion inherently virtuous. They are tools, instruments for the attainment of certain ends, to be judged by their adaptability, suitability to their task in a changing world and in varying circumstances. Nazism, Fascism, Samuraiism or Bushidoism each embody certain notions about the ruling of men. Had these notions been applied to each of the respective nations and to them alone, it would not have much concerned the rest of the world, though of course ideas do cross frontiers and clash with each other even in a peaceful world. But these systems became organs of national expansion, depredation and spoliation on the grandest scale, and by their extension threatened the lives and property of the rest of the human race. The men who believe in government by discussion had to defend themselves or submit to extinction, and thus along with the politics which is but another name for the search for wealth and power there went the politics of the ideologist, which is the struggle for mastery in the world of ideas.

The war now waging, a continuation of that begun in 1914, is another example of the biological and financial struggle. It is a war of survival between Britain and Germany. The British Empire is said to have been created in a

THE BACKGROUND

fit of absence of mind. If interpreted literally this is not true, but it pays an unwilling tribute to the casual manner in which the Britisher seems to go about his business. And it prompts the question whether the Anglo-Saxon race deserves its good fortune. It can hardly be denied that the English have been lucky in their geographical situation and in the time they chose for expansion. Other races and peoples might contest their claim to inherit the earth, but that Fortune had been kind could not be gainsaid.

When the Great Commerce arrived and the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, they were happy in possession of a population sufficiently ductile to submit to the change. Human beings who had hitherto accepted an open air life as their natural portion were not unwilling to sacrifice the pleasures of that existence, which though few were real enough, for the monetary advantages to be gained by working under strict regulation in mill and factory. And since their children, under this new regime, could also be used as wage earners, it was but natural that there should be a swift increase in the population. And it is to be remembered that the introduction of child labour into factories, highly regrettable in many ways, was yet an improvement on the use of child labour in the home, which had long been customary, since it did at least mean that there was some regulation of hours and conditions of toil, bad as the conditions often were. Thus with the discovery of new markets, the British people were able to meet the increasing demand, to sell at advantage to themselves in all parts of the world and to build up the national wealth.

For a century and more this process went on, aided by a financial skill which could learn by experience and profit from opportunity. It made London the centre of world finance and the British people acknowledged leaders in commerce and industry. Such a history could not leave the rest of the world unconcerned. It has not done so. Other nations

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

have looked askance at this development and will continue thus to look. For it is not in human nature that one people should enjoy this pre-eminence for so long without incurring the envy of others, less happy in their destiny.

Here is the explanation of the conflict which has been in existence, with intermissions, since 1914. It is not a temporary phenomenon, to be remedied by goodwill and kind words. Wounds of this sort are not healed by verbal plasters. The earth's surface is a limited area, mapped out and known to all educated men. The most valuable portions of that area have long since been staked off. Notices against trespassers have been erected. There are keepers, bailiffs and guardians of all sorts, prepared to enforce the rights of the title holders. What reason for surprise that those who have secured but little should resent the existing divisions of land and goods?

It is therefore useless to talk as though some immediate rearrangement could ensure permanent satisfaction and universal concord. Such a result is highly desirable and would be worth considerable sacrifices. But any such arrangement could only be temporary. The nation to whom much was given would esteem such a gift as a sign of weakness. It is a proved error to propitiate pirates and blackmailers. If the present generation accepted the gift, its successors would believe that they could extort more from the timid holder. For this reason no strong nation willingly surrenders valuable territory. Whenever such a surrender is made it is only under the pressure of force. There is slight reason to suppose that any other means will be adopted in the future. The exercise of this force may be disguised, to conciliate the injured nation. But diplomatic suavity cannot disguise the truth. Why then pretend that things are otherwise? Better accept the facts. We have vast estates scattered about the world. They were obtained for us by the perilous labours of our ancestors. We hold them on the same conditions.

THE BACKGROUND

The immediate causes of this war are known, the secondary causes may be suspected. There is the ever-present passion for power. Germany desired to be the first nation in the world. That desire is probably shared by every organized and civilized people. It is the ambition of the individual for priority carried over to the nation. It always has existed and will continue to be one of the driving agencies of the political world. With most nations the desire is kept in subjection by the logic of realism. The weak nation may dream of world supremacy but is corrected by the knowledge that other nations stand in the way.

The trouble with the German people is that they are not obviously incapable of attaining this end. They believed that there was a chance, by a military victory, of capturing world supremacy. It was a gamble but the stakes were worth the risk. Hence comes this war. For we cannot allow this to happen. Apart from all questions of morality, international law, the beauty of peace, the wish for justice, all excellent things, we cannot allow the German race to become the dictators of Europe. She would be a menace to our own safety as a nation, a threat not merely to our Imperial position, but to our existence as an independent people. The idealist may resent this as an insult to the higher intelligence of mankind; the realist knows that this is the truth. We fought Germany in 1914 because she threatened our existence, we fought her in 1939 for the same reason, whatever may have been the ostensible and proclaimed causes for our entrance into the war; and if we are to continue as a great Power in the world we must be prepared to accept the same challenge whenever it is offered. Germany believed in the attainment of mastery by force and proclaimed that belief. We know that mastery must always be maintained by force, that ultimately there is no other means by which the liberties and rights of men and nations can be protected, but having some respect for the decencies and refinements of civilized

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

life, we did not shout this unpleasant truth from the housetops. And because of this modest reticence the world at large thought we had forgotten the primal truths on which civilization rests, that we would not or could not fight. They were wrong.

There is another reason why this war had to be fought. Our people have declared themselves a democracy, accept the general principle that government shall be exercised by and for the people, thus following the track opened by the French and the American peoples or, if we prefer it that way, developing the implications of our own history from Simon de Montfort and the first Parliament, the rebellion against the Stuarts and the Revolution of 1688. The political form adopted by the Germans was that of autocracy and, as they were by choice if not by necessity a military people, and had been successful in their recent wars, they assumed that with their compact and rigid order, combined with their unquestionable intelligence and courage, they were more than a match in conflict for the peoples organized under such a loose and fluid system as that of democracy. They forgot that the Athenians, on occasion, could fight as well as talk.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRACY

A SINGULAR fate seems to attend the meaning of certain words. They rise and fall in public esteem, with little apparent reason beyond the fashion of the hour. They have their day of dignity and even of grandeur and then fall into decay, become obsolete, as we say, or even shameful, so that circumspect people avoid them. Then for some reason they become respectable and even honourable again. Such a word is democracy. It stands for one of the three major forms into which Government may fall. These are monarchy, the degraded form of which is tyranny; aristocracy, of which the degraded form becomes oligarchy; and commonwealth, of which the degraded form is democracy. This is the exposition of the terms after Aristotle. It is plain that he was not enamoured of the last term democracy, nor have his successors, the thinkers who concerned themselves with the fortunes of States, been much more favourably inclined. They have spoken of the many-headed beast, of fierce democracies and those who could tame them, and have regarded those times as dangerous to mankind in which the will of the many ruled the destinies of nations.

Whether they were right or wrong can hardly be judged in an objective fashion. At present the question remains undecided. For mankind is now caught up in the process of trying out democracy on a scale hitherto unknown, save in the imaginative flights of the prophets who predict the world's political future. Certain it is that the word democracy has become not merely respectable but honourable. Whoever wishes to have the popular voice in his favour must declare himself a supporter of the democratic principle, and its application everywhere to everything and everybody.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

In America, distinct from the political party which is called Democratic, the sentiment of the whole people, as well as its traditions, is in favour of democracy. The most ardent Republican would not deny that, as against the other two, monarchy and aristocracy, his inclinations are all on the side of the democratic idea. Great Britain has taken the word under its protection and avows itself strongly in favour of democratic principles; whilst France, the political mother of democracy in the modern world, still keeps the banner flying, though compelled for the moment to adopt a different tone from that of 1793 when her legions began their march across Europe with the democratic idea as their inspiration. And now the ancient culture of China, with its exaltation, after Confucius, of the superior person, to be realized in the Mandarin, has accepted the democratic principle; whilst India, not to be outdone, has also sworn allegiance to the new political cult and dreams of progress and self-government. Decidedly if these things mean anything, democracy is becoming the all important power in the political world; and the men who do not love it yet realize its strength see that it is on the point of controlling the political destiny of mankind.

There are those who would give to democracy the status of a religion. They would make of it a 'code of conduct, a rigorous way of life, beginning with morals, with an act of faith about the nature of man and the dignity of his soul'. This is indeed to confuse things that differ. One may, like Malvolio, 'think highly of the soul' without being democratic in temper or opinion. Indeed this would be to constitute a new ecclesia, with the right of inquisition into the opinions and personal habits of its members, which would be just as tyrannous as the examiners under Torquemada or the melancholy busybodies satirized by Burns and Barrie. If democratic citizenship is correlated with a particular set of philosophic or religious opinions then indeed farewell to all

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRACY

that men have hoped for in the way of intellectual, artistic, and moral freedom. Add to this the injunction that to be true democrats 'we must conquer the slackness, indifference to truth, acquiescence in what stupid men call practical' and we have the measure indicated of what in full bloom would be precisely the form of slavery from which the democratic spirit is supposed to have set men free. For it is the privilege of citizens in a sound democracy to believe that many things about which men get excited and talk vociferously in public are of small importance, and that a measure of detachment which may seem like indifference is the best safeguard against the fervours of the aggressive evangelist; that truth is hard to find either in books, academies or amongst men of the world; and that something of the spirit of Montaigne would be a better shield and preventive against many of the ills of life than the rash confidence of those who are certain that they have found the truth which alone can set men on the road to health, happiness and peace. If one had to choose, an astringent scepticism would be more useful to the working of the democratic theory than the rash certainties of those who would rigorously define the thought and rule the conduct of the citizens of a modern State. And if it is a sin to be practical, to assert that in this world mathematics must be believed in or bankruptcy waits round the corner, that figures represent real values and are not, as one of our politicians lately said, merely types and symbols, then one must conclude that the end of any democratic community worked on these lines will inevitably be the swift coming of chaos and everlasting night. No! Democracy is a method of governing communities of men, the least imperfect and perilous that men have yet discovered, but dependent for its very existence on the largest measure of personal freedom that can be granted to the citizen without detriment to his fellows.

Anglo-American democracy may now be regarded as

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

victorious, not in the sense that it has acquired all that it desires, but in the sense that it sees its goal, knows the road and can calculate the possibilities and discount some of the dangers of the future. Because it has travelled so far on the road to maturity one may now speak of the responsibilities which accrue to its position. It may be likened to a young man entering upon an estate to which he is entitled; the least that can be expected is that he shall not rashly squander the patrimony or destroy the property. He is not only the heir but also the trustee and there will be others to come after him.

Democracy then has the responsibility of maintaining the constitutional fabric within which the inheritance has been acquired, the treasure stored, the ancient home built. It must be remembered that the acquisition of control, even partial, is a comparatively recent event. It is only a century since Lowe declared that we must educate our masters. If anyone had told Wellington that he and his soldiers were fighting for the preservation of democracy, he would have met with a vigorously expressed denial. Neither British kings nor British thinkers, if Burke was representative, nor British soldiers were enamoured of the democratic principle nor the democratic habit of mind. Godwin's *Political Justice*, Paine's *Rights of Man*, Leigh Hunt's journalism, Hazlitt's *Essays*, Cobbett's *Rides*, all of which would be regarded as elementary lessons in democratic ideas to-day, were at that time only the scribblings of disaffected persons, in revolt against established conventions and dominant political principles. The change over is considerable between then and now, but it has all been accomplished within little more than a century and within the fabric of the ancient constitution. And this has been possible because the method used has been government by discussion.

Triumphant democracy, then, as it proceeds to enter upon its inheritance must accept the responsibility of maintaining

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRACY

this fabric. Modifications of method there will be, the pace of change may be accelerated here and retarded there, according to a rational expediency, but whatever changes be brought about the rule must be that government is by discussion, not by delegation, that is by a power that comes from the people, not by a power which is imposed upon the people from above.

Working within these limits there has been up to the present a real improvement in the life of the Anglo-Saxon peoples during the last century. The increase of numbers in the population has been phenomenal and if life be a benefaction, if to be is better than not to be, the difference between the senseless clod and the vital creature a real rise in value, even under bad conditions (and to deny this is to fall back upon the most extreme of pessimistic theories), then the augmentation of the numbers of living human beings in this country has been a real advance.

Nor can there be doubt about the betterment of human conditions during this time. Allowing for the worst that can be said of the effects of the factory system, the table of the Yorkshire wool worker, the Lancashire cotton operative, the Wiltshire labourer, was supplied with a richer variety of food than the ancestors of these men had ever known. Tea, coffee and cocoa were becoming the accepted drinks of the people, fruits from all parts of the earth were carried to Covent Garden and from there to the towns and villages of the country; beef from Argentina and mutton from Australia were becoming known, and fish from the sea could be found in Midland towns still fresh and cheap. Ten pounds of good beef, roasted at the bakehouse if not in the family oven, would form the Sunday dinner of multitudes of miners in Wales, boot clickers and finishers in Northampton, and shipwrights in Glasgow. Housing was far from perfect, but there was a slate roof in place of thatch, brick walls where once there had been wattle and daub, chimneys instead of the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

ancient vent hole, and the rent was such as a man might meet without feeling that the greater part of his wages was going in payment for a mere shelter. Sanitation was imperfect but it was better than had been known by Marie Antoinette; the bathroom was still distant but the family tub was at hand.

It is human nature to forget the rock from whence it has been dug, to despise the customs of the grand-parents and to revolt against the advantages procured for one generation by the labours of its predecessor. Collective gratitude is a non-existent quantity in this world, and men who aid in the betterment of the race and its conditions are doomed to suffer the contumely of their descendants for not having known more or done better. At present there is no stone or stick too heavy with which to beat the men who put modern democracy on the track of progress and guided its first stumbling steps, and of all the irritating experiences there are few more annoying than that of listening to the account of what one owes to one's ancestors. But these despised men did great things and they did them under the rule of government by discussion and within the fabric of the Constitution. And the continuance of this is a responsibility for the democracy of to-day.

The primary aim of democracy, government by discussion, is to set men free to think their own thoughts, to organize themselves into groups and corporations, according to their inclinations and tastes.

But can a community of persons thus eager to promote the free discussion of all things continue to hold together a commonwealth, or, to use the dreaded word, an Empire? The task is not easy. It is said that the bonds of Empire are being made stronger by arrangements carried out during the last half century—the Ottawa Conference and the Statute of Westminster are examples. One hopes that this is true, but one cannot be sure. There is no doubt whatever about the devotion of the Dominions to the Motherland and to the idea

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRACY

of the Commonwealth. But it would be foolish to forget that States are and must be guided by self-interest, never for any length of time by altruistic purposes and ideals alone. And the question is — how long will it be for the interest of the component parts of the Empire to remain bound to the old country and the sister States? So far it has been decidedly to the interest of the Dominions to retain the connection. Australia has been defended by the Fleet. Without this her small population, in spite of the valour of its manhood, could not possibly have held their great land against the envy and hostility of other nations in the Pacific and elsewhere. Canada has had the latent force of the British Government behind it in all its dealing with the rest of the world. New Zealand and South Africa have not lost but gained by their relationship with Britain and it is to be hoped that these conditions will continue. But it is plain that the Dominions are developing a strong industrial society, hitherto almost unknown to them, their energy having been directed heretofore to the production of food supplies. The cessation of war will find these countries possessed of a powerful industrial plant, a multitude of industrial workers, divorced from the land, enamoured of high wages and the life of the town. Of course there will be interchange of goods between the Dominions and ourselves and such trade relations have large possibilities for the future, but there will be problems to puzzle even strong minds.

Another consideration arises from the acceleration given to the development of aviation by the war and the discovery that upon a sufficiency of air power depends the safety of each country, certainly of our own. When an aeroplane can cover 25,000 miles, circling the globe in one flight and carrying heavy bombs with it, the annihilation of distance will have become an unpleasant reality and any one country on the globe will be within striking distance of every other. Sea power then may become relatively unimportant, in

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

spite of Mahan, with considerable effects on the authority of Britain. Can this country then give to her daughter peoples the protection which would make her useful, if not indispensable, to their development? If not, these countries must rely on their own resources or seek alliances where strength may be found. An Imperial people, and by the logic of history we are still that, however much we may resent the term, must bear the cost of Empire. Will our democracy continue to accept this? Our political leaders, the elected representatives, will never make the mistake of George III in his dealings with America, but may fail to show the courage of Chatham in dealing with difficult situations in the foreign field. And such courage may be necessary if the democracy is to be in the future the heart of an Empire.

If democracy is to accept this responsibility then it must acknowledge that foreign policy is the really important realm of political activity. We have too often acted on the assumption, save when at war, that foreign affairs were rather a nuisance, a necessary but distasteful element, entering as a hindrance into the machinery by which home affairs were to be regulated for the comfort and happiness of every citizen. This is the way Empires are ruined. Expensive wars can often be avoided where the diplomatists are aware that behind them there is an intelligent and well-armed people, prepared to make war rather than suffer themselves to be edged out of the company of world rulers. The first task of democracy is not to wage war, but to be prepared at any moment to make war if it is necessary for the safety of the State. Charles V, Philip II, Charles XII, Louis XIV all waged wars which helped to destroy their own authority and the prosperity of their country. A wise and skilful diplomacy could probably have avoided most of these errors. Such leaders are dangerous to any people. But Cromwell, Richelieu, Bismarck waged wars which helped to create and strengthen the nation over which they ruled.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRACY

Such men are national benefactors even though their work may appear to be at first injurious to the health and prosperity of their own people. The democracy which wills to keep itself alive and strong in this world need not, should not, think in terms of foreign conquest, but it must always be prepared to defend itself by force of arms, otherwise it will be destroyed by the rapacious Powers which are always on the watch for opportunities of plunder. And such Powers will arise in all ages of the world as long as human nature remains the same as it has been in historic time.

There is reason why our people should consider this and take heed. For years we have been listening to the siren voices of those who spoke pleasant things. Warned that evil forces cannot be controlled by wishing alone we hugged our illusions until the earthquake woke us from our slumbers. As a nation we were concerned with our insular affairs, with favourite social policies. Yet the thinkers of Germany had taught their people that all improvement of the masses depended upon right relations with the world outside the gates. The serious business of statesmen is and must always be with foreign affairs, for when the house is on fire who thinks about the clean tablecloth?

They who persuaded us to ignore the external danger meant well. But they were mistaken. Poland, Norway, Belgium, Holland, France proved that increased comfort is worthless unless the dykes and walls are garrisoned against the enemy from without. These errors are not of recent date. Our nation has been mentally dominated by teachers who refused to see the ugly realities, who kept men thinking about the garden and conservatory whilst the flood was rising. It was a costly blunder.

The risks and burdens of Empire have been forced upon the British people by changing circumstances, by the vigour of her sons, their adventurous temper and their proved skill in administration. Not by any long-sighted schemes for the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

management of populations yet unborn, but by attention to the needs of a given situation as it arose, with such instruments as were at hand, has the Empire come into being. And it would be lamentable indeed if, with gradual change to a more democratic way of life and the arrival at power and authority of a different stratum of the population, these responsibilities were to be ignored and opportunities for useful service to be despised and neglected.

CHAPTER III

THE AGE OF SENTIMENT

THE truth is that much of our thinking has been vitiated by an excess of emotion, due to revolt against unpleasant facts. Many of the popular leaders promised a life pleasant and profitable for all, given certain social readjustments. True these would require goodwill, but this trifling condition could be assured. This disposition to sentimentalize public and political work is still with us. We view the past as a time of atrocious suffering with small compensation. Our intellectuals would write another Martyrdom of Man. It shows itself in the literary descriptions of personal childhood and youth. With what melancholy the autobiographer dwells upon his infancy, the repressions, inhibitions, fixations, unlovely surroundings, harshness of his elders, pleading with the reader for compassion. Gissing, Wells, Galsworthy, are in rebellion against the universe which has brought them into being, made them partners in the miserable business of living. How rare is the astringent word, the brave oracular utterance which tells men that they are not born to be happy but to experience, to endure, that they may know.

When one says of a people or of an age that it is characteristically sentimental, one may fairly be challenged with the question — what do you mean? For it may be objected that a nation is made up of all sorts of individuals ranging from the brutalism of an angry bull to the timidity of a fawn. How classify them as one? Of an age or period, how can it be said to have a common feature which distinguishes it from other ages or periods? Except as a point in time marked by prominent personalities, what sense is there in speaking of the Augustan age, the Georgian period, the naughty 'nineties, since all these have been peopled by ordinary men.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

and women, who may differ from each other when living as individuals, but do not greatly vary in their essential human characteristics from one century and climate to another? And there is reason in the objection, especially in the minds of those who, influenced by current Psychological notions, claim to find something unique in each person. The various characters are so distinct that any common denominator save the merely human can hardly be found.

And yet we do think of a nation or an age as one, blending all the minor variations in certain general descriptive terms, and 'the Age of Reason' or the 'logical French' are phrases which convey a real meaning. And if we say that sentimentalism has prevailed in the democracies during the last century (not certainly the sentimentalism of Watteau shepherdesses or Laurence Sterne's grinning pathos), it also may have a meaning. And the meaning is that the democracies have often thought and behaved like spoiled children. Everyone knows the type, the healthy obstreperous boy who has never been denied anything the parents can afford, has been taught to look on himself as important, has got the superiority complex, so much more annoying than its opposite, in a high degree, and imposes himself on others by his bad manners or fits of brooding sulkiness. As the spoiled child to his surroundings, so have the democracies been to the nature of things. For a century Britain and America have enjoyed a prosperity almost without equal in the world, yet one seeks vainly for a recognition of their good fortune, or of gratitude to the Destinies which permitted this to happen. Like so many of the sons of successful manufacturers and merchants they have taken all this for granted, with no thanks to the men who helped to make it possible, but sharp criticism and resentment at any failure of supplies. And the tendency to encourage this attitude, by flattery, by submission to the increasing demands on the family exchequer, without reference to the exiguous circumstances

THE AGE OF SENTIMENT

in which multitudes of other human beings live out their days, is what is meant by describing it as a sentimental age. And now the democracies may say of their counsellors and courtiers what the aged Lear said of those who had misled him: 'They told me I was everything. They lied, I am not ague proof.'

Trained in a harder school, taught to know the truth about human life on this planet, the population would revolt against these obvious deceptions. It would demand that in justice to all, some responsibility should be left to the individual to adapt himself to the ever changing circumstances of life, to fend for himself, lest a whole nation should be pauperized and enervated.

Still more dangerous does this sentimentalism become when it turns to the making of restrictive laws and prohibitions for the general good. Here is the royal road to perdition. All the citizens are to be treated so that there shall be no hard cases. There must be no temptations left to men lest they fall into error. Private virtues, excellent in themselves, beautiful above all things when produced by the clash between personal desire and external allurements, are to be produced in the mass by legislative enactment, and men are to be made temperate, charitable, compassionate, by a social regime which prevents them from getting drunk or being cruel or unkind. There shall be no more cakes and ale because the legislators are virtuous. And the citizens are to be fed on milk lest meat should make them to offend. The chief voices of the nineteenth century complained that the human being was neglected by Government. All that has been changed and we are on the way to becoming the people most famous for the Inspectors, Regulators and Controllers who have taken possession of the common man. That these things should be done during the war was acknowledged by all, for debating societies cannot make war. But there is some danger that we become habituated to control by our

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

elected rulers, find ourselves paralysed, since we have forgotten how to use our limbs. And when we consider the inability of Governments in the past to implement their promises, their vain profferings of happiness for men, if men will but do as they are told, we may conclude that the same effects will follow the same causes since the conditions of the experiment remain essentially the same.

Matthew Arnold gave it as his opinion that the British were a kindly race, not without a certain nobility in their nature, and the egregious Marshal Goering has underlined this compliment by declaring that the British had allowed themselves to be debrutalized beyond what is safe. Accepting the measure of truth in both these judgments we may claim to be as tolerant of eccentricity, as intolerant of preventible suffering as any in the world. It was not always so. In the days when the Empire was being founded the British were considered, with some reason, a brutal race, hard fighters, heavy drinkers and coarse eaters, skilled in the art of the prize ring, delighting in cock fighting and bull baiting, built on ox-like lines, with Clive, Squire Western, Bligh of the *Bounty* as samples of the breed in life and literature, and John Bull, no romantic idealist, as the typical figure of the race. They were a tough lot and it is idle to suppose that they could have done their work, clutched with strong hands at some of the best prizes the earth offers, had there not been this strong basis of animalism on which the national life was built.

It has seemed to some cool observers that a century of prosperity might have changed all this, bringing into being a breed of men with a better knowledge of the world (after all there have been seventy years of compulsory education), but lacking in the strong masculine qualities which marked their forbears. And since the realities of life in this world have not changed and humanity in the mass remains much what it has always been, reflective minds have wondered

THE AGE OF SENTIMENT

whether when the great trial came, as it was sure to come, the new manhood would be equal to the strain. Well, the answer to that question has been given. Before 1914 Asquith and Morley could seriously discuss the question whether the influence of thought and scholarship and the diffusion of religious dubiety throughout the greater part of the nation would not incapacitate the people for the task of waging a long and hard war. Tested in two of the sternest struggles humanity has known, the fibre of the race has proved equal to the strain alike on land and sea and under the sea, and in that new and terrifying theatre, the air. A courage, not merely stubborn and dogged, but alert, clear eyed, swift as an arrow, tenacious as steel and flexible as a reed has been revealed as the occasion called; the breed of men has stood firm by the old traditions and has outshone the legends of ancient valour in a hundred different scenes of war.

Yet there remains the question in some minds — do we know how to be hard? It is not a business of courage, daring, willingness to die. That is proved and known of all. But to be capable of that austerity of mind and severity of act without which the surgeon is helpless, the judge incompetent for his task, and the statesman the victim of contending emotions rather than the dispassionate calculator of political probabilities. Such interrogations are not without point when one recalls the prevalent disposition to paint the future in glowing colours; to provide the populace with mental narcotics, to blunt and evade the answer to every question which seeks to penetrate beyond the bright façade of cheerful makebelieve, so common in all the agencies of instruction and entertainment; and the brazen optimism which, ignoring every cloud and magnifying every ray of sunshine, continues to make ever larger promises on behalf of society to the citizen.

Or the query may be put by those who see with some concern the gradual taming of the independent and bold

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

character by which as a race we have been distinguished. Obedience to the law, tacit compliance with each new regulation, the moulding of conduct into a common pattern, may seem signs of advance to the humanitarian, of real progress to those whose ideal of civilization is an ordered and regimented humanity, marching in prescribed paths to the commands of a scientific mentor, a priestly ruler, or a military despot. But the devotee of the free spirit considers the remote consequences of these changes in the mood of the people and will not always welcome them with applause, since it is better that there should be an occasional trespass upon the rights of property than the meek acceptance of endless regulations, some occasional drunkenness than the frigid sobriety of those who have been dragooned into virtue.

Such queries and the spirit from which they spring may be intensely irritating to the people whose one idea is to treat the democratic masses as sheep, herding them together that they may be the more conveniently pastured, shepherded, and sheared. The consequences of their method of dealing with humanity are plain and our people should know them well enough, seeing that they are meeting the cost in life and wealth and will be for many a day to come. But even our people need to be watchful lest the thing they hate and fear should come upon them and a nation's manhood become tamed and submissive. The men of this new age may have nerves sensitive to every emotion and minds open to every idea, but they will need to be wary of illusions and to carry in their breasts a core of granite, against which the little tyrants within and the despots without break in vain.

CHAPTER IV

THE METHOD

THE world is moving towards democracy. Even the revolt of the Totalitarian Powers against this tendency is rather a tribute to the strength of the democratic movement than an indication of its weakness. For their leaders dread the undermining of their power by the spread of new knowledge, whilst the democracies welcome it as an addition to their strength. In the presence of a phenomenon so general acceptance seems the only rational course. But this acceptance need not be meek and silent, unless there is real belief in the ideas and proposals of the democratic cohorts. And one of the least pleasing features of the modern world is this acquiescence, this welcome given by people who are far from rejoicing over the advent of this new order. That professional publicists should adapt themselves to their environment is to be expected. It is their metier, the condition of their existence. But that men of station and affluence should become advocates of these ideas, whilst retaining possessions and privileges acquired by inheritance or through labours of their own, may well cause surprise. When a social leader can proclaim himself a democratic Duke, when Lords temporal and even Lords spiritual are complimented as being democratic persons, the observer must note a strange indifference to the meaning of words. Surely there is here a silent agreement to accept the current phraseology at its face value, whilst retaining a situation which, though fluctuant and uncertain, is better than being drowned in the sea of anonymity. It is this uncritical acceptance of the new style against which the plain person may well protest.

Far indeed is all this from the hatred of the profane multitude, confessed by Horace, which is a direct statement of a mental attitude. Equally remote is it from George Gissing's

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

frank statement, 'I never was and never shall be capable of democratic fervour'. Yet such words might find a response even amongst those who accept the democratic theory. For this distrust of the commonalty may be rooted in a judicial doubt of their wisdom, dislike of their taste, fear of their judgment. And such a reasoned scepticism might produce an antiseptic criticism, at once a corrective and a tonic to the sufferers from political hysteria.

It might help men to draw a distinction between the democracy of the spirit and the democracy of the law and the letter. The one is a disposition of mind, the other an effort to enforce uniformity upon the panorama of human nature. The one is a friendly tolerance, the other a calculated endeavour to lop and pollard human life. It has often been noted that the impassioned lover of the people is singularly exclusive in his personal friendships and likes an iron gate between himself and the human crowd. Parnell had some regard for the cotters and farmers who voted for him, but he treated his collaborators with cold contempt. For Parnell was a patrician working in a plebeian medium and seldom allowed it to be forgotten.

It might be an amusing exercise to apply this test to some of those who have been notable as the spokesmen of the democratic principle. The results could be a little surprising, chiefly in this that those who seemed to be the heralds of the democratic idea are strange to it in their temper, whilst those whose words would separate them by a world from the democratic theory are often saturated with the spirit of democracy. Milton is a leveller since he hates kings, but his pride will hardly permit him to find an equal as companion. Byron storms across Europe as the hierophant of the doctrine, but can never forget that he is an English Lord. Samuel Johnson and Walter Scott are Tories and aristocratic in their opinions, but democratic in the breadth of their sympathies, the sense of their kinship with all mankind. Such a test

THE METHOD

applied to any Senate would produce some unexpected divisions. Fox would always be with the people in heart, whatever his political fantasy or mood, and Pitt could never be other than an aristocrat. But Disraeli might be the man of the people and Gladstone the exclusive patrician at times; whilst Keir Hardie would be always amongst the crowd of common folk, but Ramsay MacDonald might be happier in the drawing-room of a countess than in the assembly of his working-class supporters. For there is a democracy of the spirit and one of the hustings. The one expresses an emotion, the other an opinion, and men may agree in everything except opinions and yet tolerate each other.

Democracy sometimes works, or fails to work, in ways not unlike those which rule in the boxing ring. Of course the ruling idea is the same in both worlds, competitive struggle, with the game played according to accepted rules. And bloody noses and black eyes are the counterpart of measured insults and wounded pride. The boy with hard knuckles and the Union leader, now M.P., are both fighting men and know it, bound to entertain their public, to provide a thrill, show some sport for the onlooker, or accept the verdict of thumbs down, and pass from blazing publicity to dark oblivion. The method is based on the best known characteristics of human nature. Bring together five hundred men as the legislators of the nation, scrutinize their activities with a jealous eye, make publicity an essential of success, with the Press always prepared to play its part as the purveyor of news, and each candidate for public favour well aware that wealth, place and influence are the prizes fought for. Then each will endeavour to catch the public ear, will assert the superior value of his own bottled wisdom and will seek to persuade his audience and out-sell his competitor, all in the best traditions, and in the hope that when the successful one passes to the front rank and becomes the leader of the hour, some of his well-known arts may be passed on to his successors.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

It is the best game in the world, outside of the biggest business, for those who have the muscles, the voice and the endless audacity required to play it.

This is the democratic method. It is seldom an appeal to cool reason. Electioneering is an art in itself which must be learned by any aspirant for political honours. Most of the best minds resent it, and many of them are kept out of the national Senate by their hatred of the appeal to popular sentiment. But this is a defect and not a virtue in the best minds; for if democracy is to be worked with any permanent success, the proud, independent, cool, reasoning man must take his place with the others in his appeal to the crowd, and harden himself against the insults, the gross humour, the coarse familiarity, the palm oil and the graft, the backstairs influence and the open hostility of those who already occupy the best seats on the platform and have no desire to see the increase of their independent rivals. The conditions as they are must be accepted, for they are integral to the working of the democratic idea, and the final apology for it is that the British and American people like it, the latter preferring an even coarser form, and will have no other.

Few shrewder observers of his fellow men have sat in the House than Timothy Healy, not himself universally beloved. It is he who reminds us that 'politicians resent slights like a *prima donna* and are equally jealous' and that 'the science of the prize ring, the devices of the betting paddock, the skill of the billiard champion, the advocacy of the Law Courts, have their counterpart in the House of Commons'. And it was a prejudiced but percipient eye which led the redoubtable Mr. Joseph Biggar to say of the row of figures which included Gladstone, Chamberlain, Bright and others, 'You say that is a strong Government? I don't see it. What I see is a row of jealous individuals'. All of which, of course, is no more final than Carlyle's gibes at the shovel-hatted brigade, or Meredith's jeers at the aprons of Bishops, but may give us pause by

THE METHOD

reminding us that Government is carried on, not by shining knights of the stained glass window type, but by vexed troubled and oft wearied men, in conditions which do not easily lend themselves to heroic gestures.

Democracy knows the value of this envious and contentious temper and, through its leaders, has utilized it with skill. Certainly it has dangers, so many and so great that strong heads have believed that democracy must extinguish itself in its own funeral ashes, by its greed, jealousy, and internecine strife. Taine indicated the peril in pointing out that in eighty years France had changed the Constitution thirteen times, and another Frenchman has reminded us that the Third Republic has lasted seventy years and has known about one hundred and ten Governments. These things are known, but they do not modify, or very slightly, the disposition of modern man to make of this business of governing a cockshy for the incalculable wills, whims, and fancies of an electorate which, if it cannot enjoy the actuality of self-government, at least intends to have the shadowy appearance of it, and the enlivening thrill of kicking out those rulers who have lost its favour.

Some score of years ago Alfred Mond spoke in the Commons. With few of the orator's graces, he discussed on that day the theories of his opponents in the light of a long and varied business experience. Congratulated on his success he said, 'Yes, good speech, why not, a man always speaks best when he does not care a curse about his audience'. If democracy is to be saved from self-destruction it must be reinforced by men who can say what they have to say, or keep silent when they think it wise, caring little for an audience which clamours for the blood of the gladiator and the sweet scent of corpses on the sand.

Clearly unless democracy is to break down the minority must have the right of speech, of agitation and propaganda, and this implies that in the working of the democratic system compromise must have a large place. The innovator,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

for whom the whole world is but a dust heap to be blown upon by purging winds of reform, must be satisfied with a small percentage of what he asks for; and the authoritarian, for whom existing institutions are sacrosanct, must be prepared to see them undermined, modified, and changed. The amateur Robespierres, who are always with us, must be content with less than their cut-throat demolition and wholesale destruction, lest their own carcasses decorate the lamp-posts, and the arch conservative must know how and when to yield with grace what otherwise will be snatched from his hand. In fine the projectors of the new democratic heaven must realize that in the working out of all plans of human betterment the physical conditions and the wilful minds of the human material must be taken into account, which means that the changes wrought will be regulated, as they have always been, by the evolutionary conditions, and the imperfect adaptation of men to circumstances which they can never quite control.

The search for the new liberty will depend on the nature of the new tyranny. Emperors, kings, and prelates need no longer be feared, their claws having been cut; and the baronage will be too discreet to try overt oppression; whilst the financiers will be careful as ever to hide their tracks; but in the ranks of democracy itself the genuine freedom may be endangered. The new guilds, unions, and corporations of workers, having gained freedom, may become tyrants in their turn. Imposing arbitrary limitations upon their own members, exercising the right of industrial excommunication upon all heretics and a fierce espionage upon all Laodiceans, the younger and bolder spirits driving the prudent leaders, all unwilling, to attacks upon their class foes, slater and riveter, plumber and porter enacting the part of Dominican or Jacobin, with all the audacity of ignorant dogmatism, here is the peril of the new tyranny. The Closed Shop will become the counterpart of the Closed

THE METHOD

Heaven and the Blackleg will be as the Amalekite who must be smitten hip and thigh; the man with a passion for work and a rage for 'getting on', that ancient and unsocial superstition, will be as Judas, for whom the only fit guerdon is the hangman's rope, whilst the leaders who conduct 'collective bargaining' will dispose of their flocks as adroitly as any Tridentine or other Ecumenical Council. For the itch of despotism, the frenzy of domination, lies hidden in every man, and against it only the jealous vigilance of men determined to be free can permanently prevail.

In recent years a new phase of the democratic conflict has appeared. The fundamental agreement on the structure of society, which permits grave differences without risking social dissolution, has been called in question. There are those who hold that this basal agreement has ceased to exist and, like Professor Laski, maintain that there is an essential difference in the judgment of the two opposing sections as to what constitutes the good working society. This sounds impressive, even alarming, but can only terrify those persons who do not realize that the problems of government are as old as civilized man and that every transformation is but another change of the Protean face and figure of society, seeking for the instrument and method of self-direction. That there is any such impassable gulf between the varying sections of the British people is a fantasy, born of frustrated desire, rather than a description of objective fact. Disraeli's *Two Nations*¹ was an exaggeration even in his day, as any Lord Mayor's Show, or war in the Crimea would have proved to the observer. The reformer who looks for a world revolution, beginning at home, may believe that the abyss is real, is widening and threatens disruption. But in fact the rift between the upper and lower classes exists chiefly in the minds of professors, politicians and the writers of fiction. And the men who think that the classless State is dreamed

¹ *Sybil: or the Two Nations.*

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

of or hoped for by the average workman in these islands does not know his world, the truth being that beneath the external framework of an apparently aristocratic or plutocratic society there exists already something of the democracy of the spirit, that sentiment of comradeship without which social life becomes almost impossible. But don't ask the British employer to address his gateman or butler as Comrade. He won't do it, and the butler prefers that the proprieties should be observed. Let the visitor from abroad, the Montesquieu or Voltaire of our time, who has heard about these divisions in the body social, familiarize himself with the golf, cricket, or football crowds, like all mobs capable of lunacy, but seldom surrendering to it, being too genial, humane, to be easily roused to vindictive rage. For the Englishman is temperamentally independent, prefers to be himself, likes differences, even the knightly and ducal, and has no mania for equality as such. He prefers liberty and the varied world that liberty can give.

All this is worth considering, for there certainly exist a number of persons who would wish it to be otherwise, since they have particular notions about the State and its rights over the citizen. For them there is no private property, since all belongs to the community which gave and can take away. They live in the world of the Social Contract. Having discovered that by the majority vote the community may strip the private citizen of all, they propose this as their avowed aim, and would gain their end by substituting the General Will for the private intention or purpose, expecting each good citizen to find his perfect freedom in the substitution of the general will for his own. This is the masterpiece of political trickery, the classical example of verbal thimblerrigging, highly successful in the land of Hegel and waiting to be tried on here. To make the individual a pauper in the name of the public weal is old style politics. It is the intention of some of our contemporaries to try it anew.

IMPERFECTIONS

THIS is said to be the century of the common man. It is an entrancing prospect, but whether on closer investigation the picture will prove so alluring is not agreed upon by all. What does emerge upon closer view is the tolerable certainty that he will be restricted in his buying and selling, tied pretty much to one place or employment, his marrying and its concomitant activities, his eating, drinking and clothing, housing and modes of amusing himself, regulated by biological professors and hygienic experts, and his opinions formed by the persistent injection of predigested notions and ideas. Victor Hugo's description of the octopus is said by those who know to be much exaggerated, but it would still serve as a picture of paternal Government engaged in regulating the life of the citizen from cradle to grave. Men have supposed that, having broken the power of many priest-hoods they had attained to a measure of liberty, but unless the common man is vigilant the new Inquisition may be, without the procession and the pyre, as dangerous as the old.

None can deny that with all the movement towards the larger liberty there go restraints on spending and saving, on the conduct of ordinary business, the management of one's own finances, the acceptance of risks, 'caveat emptor', felt by the housekeeper and the small tradesman, which would have provoked a quick revolt in the minds of our grandfathers. And they are not the most obtuse amongst our fellow citizens who question the wisdom of the ambitious controller's underlying assumption, that the best way to get business done is to take it away from those whom it most concerns.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

Why does the citizen submit to these encroachments upon his liberty? The grand reason is war, past, present or future, but the secondary cause is the citizen's pursuit of equality. The normal Briton is little of a visionary, but he is well aware that whatever the social differences may be, the basal relations of men to the earth, their physical origin and destiny are the same. In the light of this knowledge some of the inequalities existing in society and their results, the sycophancy of the serving classes, the cold greed of the propertied and the vanity of the ruling classes disgust him, and he turns with hope to those who speak of the classless State. We all know that flattering if dull picture of perfection; poverty, fatigue, superiority, distinction, oppression, bullying, tipping, patronage, all the hateful things that wound the natural man's pride, have disappeared. True the landscape is grey, the women are in cottons and the men in corduroys, the silks, velvets, feathers, and jewels have gone, but there is the pleasure of knowing that equality has come. Compel the Briton to live in that world, offer him no other and he might turn ugly, repudiate it all with astonishing verbal and physical vigour, but keep it as a picture of a distant future and it may please, may persuade him to become half a slave again, whilst cheating himself with the dream that he is free.

It is granted that the future lies with that form of Government which pays most respect to the democratic principle. If there is to be movement, change, advance in the world, the democratic peoples are those amongst whom it will be found. Accepting this one may yet realize that some disappointments attach to the working of the democratic theory and that, because of this, democracy needs criticism rather than flattery. This is generally admitted. The first flush of fervour has died down. The arguments of Lowe and others directed against the principle have little value at the polls to-day. But amongst the thoughtful these same arguments are now weighed and considered. For the proof by ex-

IMPERFECTIONS

perience has been made and the results are not all such as bring rejoicing to the hearts of popular leaders.

In our own land there are some who doubt whether recent developments, especially in the realm of foreign affairs, justify the alliance of democracy with the Imperial purpose which is supposed to rule our relations with other Powers. And the question may be asked — can democracy retain an Empire won by men who would have scorned the notion that they were the agents chosen to further democratic ideals?

Already the Irish people are separated from us, are free to proclaim themselves our enemies and to become our open foes. Now a still more ominous threat is heard. The idea of complete withdrawal from India is freely canvassed as a measure in the near future. These things provoke the query — Can democracy hold the Empire?

In the past we have exported multitudes of young men to the far corners of the earth. Primogeniture, by which property descends through entail to the eldest son, has been one of the chief agents in Imperial expansion. The younger sons have sought fortune in distant lands. After the war many of these avenues will be closed. Even should we regain all the lost territories it is doubtful whether they can be used again as a dumping ground for our superfluous human energy. New methods of governing native populations will be tried, since the native populations will feel that they have a right to experiment on their own behalf. The travelling novelist may have been unfair in his description of the planter of the East, with his exclusive club, his endless lounging in saloons and bar parlours, and his refusal to consider himself as trustee for the native populations which work under his supervision. But the sting of these libels, if such they be, will remain, and the old easy life of the Public School man who has gone East has vanished, perhaps for ever. And the new democracy, which claims admission everywhere for its sons, must through

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

them justify itself as the guardian and guide of the vast coloured populations under Imperial control.

Like many other things, notions, and theories, democracy does not always work out as its devotees expect. Like a religious revival or a scientific discovery, the consequences, whilst assuredly obeying the law of cause and effect, are not exactly what was looked for. Thus it may be something of a shock to the pure democrat to find that in the land of democracy it is not certain that every man has an equal share in the management of affairs, even when the ballot is secret and the time-honoured methods of making the voters drunk, or dosing them with drugs, or tying them in the nearest barn, or threatening them with physical violence by sword, dagger or pistol, are not brought into service. When the reform has been brought about and every man is equal to every other, at least so far as the voting can make him so, the result may be a new rulership by the few, as the bosses of Chicago, or government by hired bravos, as under the Carbonari or the Mafia or the modern Fascisti; or again control may rest in the hands of shrewd business men who have cornered all the good posts and hold them at their disposal for the payment of faithful servants. And even where everything has been done according to the books, and the moral tone is as high as that of a New England spinster, the result of all the precautions may only be to create a situation in which the professional and the commercial personalities of the city or country exercise all the power. Out of democracy comes forth oligarchy, the doctrine of rule by the fit and the few. The career may be open to all the talents, but the prizes have been picked up beforehand by those who have rigged the course and secured the loot.

And even at the best what has happened may not be the creation of a permanent equality, but merely an elevation of the level from which each man starts climbing. When all attend the same school, pass through the same curriculum,

IMPERFECTIONS

leave at the same age, life itself still remains a competitive struggle, with more posts in offices, more jobs for the skilled artisan, but also more candidates for the different positions. And since all try to rise, the struggle has only become more acute. Nor can the influence of parents, social status, and early surroundings be ignored. Some parents are prudent and frugal, and more farseeing than others, and their children will reap the benefit of these homely virtues, so that they need not sell their brains at once for bread, but can wait the turn of the market; a trifling matter in the individual case but, over a generation or two, inevitably resulting in the creation once more of a favoured class. In fact, if democracy is the effort to create equality it involves a process which must be continually repeated, the lopping of all heads which appear above the prescribed level, the ever increasing effort to handicap the lightfooted ones, so that the race may be run according to the abstract notions of equity and fair play so dear to the heart of the idealist, and so little thought of by that blind Nature which sets the race and gives the prize.

The imperfections of democracy are not unknown on the American continent. The Harding Administration left some unsavoury reminiscences in the minds of good Americans, which have not yet passed into oblivion. Secretary Fall and the Teapot Dome scandal is not the pleasantest theme on which to discourse in the hearing of our transatlantic cousins, and the Tammany rule of New York, or the Thompson regime in Chicago may be equally annoying to those sound patriots who wish to look on the bright side. But these things have never affected the devotion of the Americans to the democratic faith. They are defects in the instrument, but the instrument is sound enough for practical purposes. Doubtless there are some traitors to the idea as there are traitors in fact, in the United States, but the man who hopes for a change over to a different political ideology,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

German, Italian or Russian, is the victim of self-created illusions.

It is in South America that one finds the doubters who question the democratic faith. There out of twenty different countries only ten are genuinely democratic in their form of government. In the others it is rulership by an oligarchy or by a single Dictator which prevails. Race, population, climate, trade, religion, geographical situation are all possible causes for the revulsion, but that it exists is certain. It is said that the people are fatigued by the inefficiency of democracy, yet they have but to look at North America to realize that inefficiency is the last word with which to stigmatize the method there used. Or one may hear Gonzalez, one of the South American leaders, assert that 'democracy solves all its problems—on paper', and with that contemptuous word dismiss the democratic claim; whilst Lopez de Mesa will declare that 'the people no longer have recourse to God, conscience, morality, science, or ethics, but substitute for these a faith—in politics'. And even the most optimistic of humanitarians would admit that this may be a poor exchange.

For he might recall that Venezuela had fifty-two revolutions in a century, that Uruguay has the most ideal of all democratic forms of government with proportional representation and every other device which can protect the people against domination by one man or by a clique, and as the result suffers from inability to get anything done; that throughout South America politics is a *business* in which nepotism and graft are taken for granted, and that men like Bolivar and Vargas and Carranza and Ibanez have used corruption and the firing squad as the ordinary instruments of rule. And remembering these things he might doubt the wisdom which sacrifices all things for the sake of politics. Yet against these may be put the figures of Washington and Jefferson and Hamilton and Grant and Lincoln and

IMPERFECTIONS

Roosevelt and the work they have done, and the believer in democracy, whether in South or North, need not be dispirited or ashamed.

Or again, how disappointing may be the actual working of democracy to the men who pride themselves on inflexible rectitude and who 'feel a stain like a wound'. Certainly one may lift an eyebrow when this is urged by those who support the aristocratic idea, as though the noble Lords and the new-made Knights had never heard of palm oil or backsheesh or blackmail or backstairs influence, and the Lady Castlemaines and the Pompadours, and those who benefited by their cynical wheedlings and threatenings, were to be found only in the pages of romance. If the corruption of the best is the worst then the Marlboroughs and the Walpoles, the Melvilles and the Hollands in our own land, or all those glittering figures and greedy faces which gleam from the pages of Saint Simon, and their numerous posterity, legitimate or bastardized, ought not to cast stones at the grocers and chandlers, contractors and builders, councillors and parliamentarians who sell themselves to the highest bidder whilst professing the loftiest sentiments of patriotism and piety.

All this is true. And it must be said that in democracy as we know it money tends to be the measure of value, and Iago's counsel, 'Put money in thy purse', becomes increasingly the precept to which men pay attention. And the older standards of integrity, the impulse of honour, the personal pride which may be a shield against the meaner vices, is likely to be weakened. It is this lowering of the common standard, this general weakening of the sense of personal dignity, which has made men dubious about the influence of democratic ideas. The standard itself may be a purely human creation, the product of sentiment, having little basis in the actualities of life, but where it is brought into general contempt there is a sensible degeneration of the social tone and

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

style, a weakening of the bonds which bind men together, not lightly to be despised.

Yet if democracy breeds this disease it also provides a remedy in a devastating publicity. The newspaper man becomes the guardian of public morals as well as of the public coffers. True to his breed he will follow a good story, a scandal, a possible scoop, with the nose of a foxhound; picking up gossip, catching the whispers of the Lobby, always the observer behind the arras, the zealous guardian of the public against the host of scallywags, pickpockets, cheats and burglars who for ever prey upon the public purse. It is an immense power and it is the grand weapon of democracy against the old Adam in mankind. Like all good things it has its defects, is the sworn enemy of dullness, privacy, serenity and the enjoyment of anonymity. It may create an appetite for sensation like morphia or cocaine, may seek to live by the exaggeration of the insignificant, and has little taste for the low voice and the exact statement. But it is the most effective of policemen, and even when we allow for the venality of its representatives, who are but men, is one of the great moral agencies of the time. And democracy has made it.

This publicity, of Press or Wireless, is one of the correctives to the everlasting deception of the public by political leaders. The business of the State must be carried on, and to-day this can only be done with the consent and approval of the masses. Thus it becomes increasingly necessary to make this intricate affair of government apparently simple, understandable by the multitude. And from this there may easily arise the system of organized deceit by which elected persons or the minions of authority veil their hidden designs and, under a mask of simplicity, guard the secrets of State. Something of this is of course necessary, and the official has always at command the final word that to speak further of this or that matter is not in the public interest. But the publicity agents.

IMPERFECTIONS

when they are free, as in democratic countries they usually are, or profess to be, can on occasion tear the veil asunder. A dangerous power to be in the hands of any body of men, not to be rashly used. But one of the strong safeguards, in times of crisis, of public liberty and also of public decency and honour. With all the dangers attendant on free printing or speaking, the value for society of this freedom outweighs all that can be said against it, and democracy will need to guard itself against any disposition to close the mouth of the agitator and bind the hand of the writer, if it wishes to retain the freedom of which it boasts.

CHAPTER VI

THE VICTIMS

WE have seen that there is a disposition to deny the ancient tradition of agreement on the basal principles of political action, to threaten with extinction the classes which, by the influence of wealth or the prestige attaching to birth, have acquired and exercised authority in the management of State affairs. The fixity of the purpose may be doubtful, the apprehension of the costs of fulfilment vague, but the desire and intention are said to exist and knowing this one may be surprised at the insouciance of the propertied classes, living with a sword above their heads, yet refusing suicide, contemplating the future with at least as much cheerfulness as the average Labour leader. They may not view the situation with indifference or equanimity, but they contrive to enjoy living in spite of the fact that they are threatened with destitution, despotism (it would be such to them), and that impoverished anonymity against which they have always sought to guard themselves. And these threats are serious, for they have been turned into the accomplished deed elsewhere. •

For these things have been done in Russia, Germany, Italy in varying degrees. Italy has shown the world how to bring the large owners of property under the control of the State, how to strip some of them by political measures and how to silence and make obedient the rest. At the same time Italy has offered an example of the manner in which the political leaders may enrich themselves at the expense of the public treasury, may create for themselves a strong body-guard of political dependents and (through their Janissaries), exercise an authority over the citizen, even the richest, quite as severe as was ever possessed by the despotic kings and conquerors of the classic or the Middle Age. But it must be

THE VICTIMS

understood that this is not the result of anything like democratic action, universal suffrage, free election and the rest. It has been brought about by the exercise of force, sometimes modified or hidden under an exterior of legality or liberty, but actually the same kind of pressure as is used by the turn-key in dealing with convicts or the soldier in handling mobs. And the German method is in essence the same. Expropriation for the benefit of the political party which happens at the moment to be on top is one of the oldest methods in the world, was common in Roman times, and has always been a weapon at hand for those who wish to effect their purposes without or against the consent of the multitude of the citizens. The Jewish financiers, the great industrialists, of Germany have been compelled to disburse large sums at the command of Hitler and his henchmen, but the method of extraction has differed little if at all from that used by the Tudor kings, or the Barons of England and France in dragging treasure from the recalcitrant Jew. It has been the method of war, and has little to do with the franchise or the hustings or the ballot or whatever else may belong to the orderly process of law making in democratic countries.

Nor is Russia in better case. The great Russian people are our friends and allies. It is not for us to criticize their mode of governing themselves, or the manner in which they choose to administer their own affairs. But we may remind ourselves that the origin of the present regime is to be sought in civil war, that the stronger party won, perhaps because the old regime had so little that could be urged in its defence, or because there was no middle class to act as buffer between the aristocrat and the peasant, or because there was so little hope of moderated improvement that nothing short of revolution could stage the new beginning and give hope to a people which had suffered too long from the sense of its own impotence. Whatever the cause the fact is that the new Government was founded in the midst of war, and rests for

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

its ultimate justification upon the use of force. It is against that possibility, the danger of a military revolution as a political measure for the equalizing of all possessions, or the negation of all private possession, that the British people must guard themselves.

There may be more than one explanation of the calmness of the propertied classes in Britain, besides the reputed phlegm of the English. Although they are no strangers to the legal method of filching rights, either as practitioners or victims, or because of this, they are not unduly perturbed, even though they know what has happened to their class in other lands. If confiscation and expropriation are to become the order of the day the Englishman might rebel, being the most patient and law abiding of men until you threaten his property, then becoming difficult to control, and likely to cause the agitator to doubt the theory that by political action all property can be peacefully transferred from private hands to the ownership of the State. And then when the deluge threatens and men of property and position are menaced by weight of numbers, they are not left without devices of their own. Long before that happens the prestige of Parliament may have been reduced, for it is precisely the présence of such men which has given it the dignity of being the best Club in Europe. It may be left to the professionals, who live by demagogic arts, who are peculiarly liable to the temptations offered by society and wealth and, as in the rest of Europe, politicians will be six a penny. Or the fortunate ones, the wealthy, may themselves learn the arts of persuasion by tongue or pen. Are the proprietors of newspapers weak-kneed, feeble-minded, degenerates or impassioned philanthropists? or the lawyers and accountants, novelists and dramatists, who march at the head of the Left-wing processions, all thrilled by the passion for equality? Alas for the Babeufs and Cloutzes of this world; when the heirs to a name and bank account go into this business of

THE VICTIMS

persuading, shaping opinion, amateurs though they be, they may beat the professionals. And if they refuse the task themselves they may hire others, bravos of the platform, spadassins of the tongue.

Utterly immoral, say the political prudes. But why? When the purpose is to overturn society, build it on foundations which are not historic but theoretical, academic, literary, are the existing owners to sit still and wait, until their throats are scientifically cut, or to be poleaxed by the latest humane killer? The thesis is that votes shall decide the question, votes counted not weighed. Votes represent opinions and opinions are formed by persuasion. The dollar is sometimes more eloquent than the tongue, and, when the reformer has turned society, once relatively stable, into an arena for public feuds, be certain that the tongue and the dollar will be used as instruments of defence by the threatened victims. The professional speaker who defends the propertied classes in a time of disruption, or the agent who secretly scatters largesse amongst needy supporters, are doing no more and no less than the trade union official or mob leader who acts for his constituents.

Since the British populace is made up of all sorts of men and women, and not a few of them have some small possessions which, when the dykes of law and order are broken down, they may easily lose, the appeal to the conservative instinct may prove more successful than the call to universal rapine and plunder. Fortunately for our society, democracy in the Anglo-Saxon world throws up men who become its natural leaders, and learn by experience of politics the difference between the desirable and the possible. If the untaught and unrestrained desires of the majority in a democracy were to be left to fulfil themselves, then democracy must always give place to the soldier, and the extreme of equality end in the despotism of one. It is in the stability of our age-long institutions and the realistic mentality of our

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

people that one finds the best bulwark against the allures of the political projector and the perils of collective hysteria.

The error underlying much of our effort is the disposition to put what is desirable before what is practicable. The work of many famous teachers of the past is spoiled by this vain assumption that they know the form and mould of the society which ought to be created. Many prophets have filled volumes with their counsels, entreaties and lamentations because their prophesyings brought small results, forgetting that they had not first asked themselves whether the theories they propounded had any fitness for the world in which they ought to be realized. Again we may hear, with every variety of emphasis and cadence, the old refrain: Let men say what ought to be the form of society, the situation of the worker, the rewards of the master minds, and these things will then be wrought out in fact and deed. The possible is limited only by the desires of mankind. And few voices are raised in protest against this chorus of the expectant multitudes. For to suggest that this is a world of finite dimensions, which pays small attention to human desires and projects may imply a mild scepticism towards accepted slogans war cries and programmes. And the purveyors of new worlds for old resent this.

CHAPTER VII

THE GUIDES

It may be said that to emphasize the egoistic element in public life is to be unjust to human nature and to treat unfairly those persons, by common consent the *élite* of the race, who have toiled with small reward or even with contempt of reward for the common good. And with the temper which prompts such a protest one would not be out of sympathy. For it is true that there can be found explorers, missionaries, soldiers, doctors, chemists, engineers, nurses, politicians and publicists of whom it can be said that they set aside most of the things that human nature craves for to concentrate on their work, to get things done which to them seemed of first importance; and that the only prize they cared for was the favourable judgment of their own conscience. To deny the influence of these altruistic motives upon human conduct is to exclude certain facts from observation which ought to form part of every rational generalization about mankind.

But it must also be admitted that in recent years there has been a disposition to assume that the altruistic motives in humanity are the springs of normal human activity and that the human race, our own section of it in particular, is activated by these motives to the practical exclusion of all others. One remembers with what vigour the Humanist writers of the nineteenth century inveighed against the greed and cruelty of the men who managed industry, the measureless contempt they expressed for the Economists who had dared to suggest that the motive of self-interest was the guiding agency in the transactions of commerce, and the emphasis placed by them upon the nobler springs of action. Perhaps it is as the result of these preachings and pleadings that one is now deluged with speech and writing which seems

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

to assume as an axiom that all action is or ought to be motivated by altruism, that the haberdasher and the oil magnate are alike urged to their task by the idea of service to the community, and that anything less than this is a dereliction from the norm of human conduct. And it may fairly be urged that if the classical economists exaggerated the self-seeking motive in human conduct, implicitly denying the contradictory facts, then the present tendency is equally an exaggeration in the opposite direction.

And this is especially dangerous when it becomes fashionable to make these professions of allegiance to a noble purpose the basis of legislative changes, to use the unjustified assumptions about common human nature as an argument for the promotion of causes which, far from being ultimately beneficial may, in the court of reason, be considered, by judicious and not ungenerous minds, rather injurious than helpful in furthering the common good.

There is some danger that the public may come to associate the utterance of altruistic sentiments with sound legislative proposals, and to accept the presence of the one as necessarily carrying with it the other, just as under the Puritan regime Master Habakkuk Barebones proved his case against the Theatre in his demand for repressive legislation by citing 'Come out from among them and be ye clean'. Against this disposition, quite as unjustified and dangerous now as it was then, it is not improper to sound a note of warning.

This seems all the more desirable since the leaders of the Left are not immune from the virus of the critical temper and, themselves being judges, their chief protagonists are no more infallible than the rest of humanity. They can be severe with each other, and a perusal of their books gives the impression that in the estimation of their colleagues and contemporaries they are as likely to be guided by interested motives as the most resolute Tory of the antique school. Mr. Fenner Brockway in his autobiographical volume *Inside the Left*

THE GUIDES

reveals himself as a devotee of Left wing ideas, a sort of John Lilburne of this new revolt against authority, sprinkling his pages with comments on leaders and collaborators which lack nothing that acidity can give them. Being interested in the opinions which a person of obviously sincere convictions might hold concerning his partners in the work of reform, I have noted the following as examples of friendly candour:

‘The Pankhursts were good stage managers, obsequious to the important and contemptuous towards insignificant persons; certain M.P.s provoked Victor Grayson to drink, to his undoing; the Labour Party on the crest, wealthy careerists buzzed round, proffering contributions in hope of reward; after the Mond-Turner talks Turner got his knighthood; during the General Strike, in the matter of printing the Co-op would not oblige the T.U.C.; Trotsky’s personal authority was that of absolute dictator and Lenin like others had been disillusioned with Trotsky; Mosley expected the post of Foreign Secretary but got a minor position only; concerning I.L.P. suggestions over Dawes Plan, MacDonald said: “In damning me they damn themselves”; M.P.s ready to lick his boots a few weeks back were incoherent with fury against their idol; Snowden’s conduct the greater disappointment, he was led away from militant Socialism by his wife.’

Nothing in these brief extracts should be in the least disconcerting to one who has a bowing acquaintance with the world. Every one of them could be duplicated from the inner story of any of the major movements which have captured the attention of mankind. The Councils and Conventions of any Church, if faithfully reported, would provide equally refreshing examples of human imperfection. In repeating them one has in view the notion that fine sentiments and vague phrases are to be accepted as proof that certain proposals are beneficial and valuable; whereas it is an ancient error to assume that because unctuous sentences

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

fall from eloquent lips, suggestions made for the government of men are bound to be timely, prudent and sagacious. They are not. The men who make these proposals are certainly not worse, often much better, than the average man; but the measures they bring forward ought to be weighed in the balances of an acute reason, judged by their long-term value, as far apart as possible from the glamour of affection or the fierceness of hatred engendered by the struggle of intransigent rivals for power.

One of the favourite remedies for social ills is the search for disinterested men. Find these predestined saviours of society and the task is finished. It is as good a scheme as another, but evidently depends upon finding men with a passion for the public weal. Whilst not impossible, this is not easy. Scrutinizing half a dozen of the leading figures of the Victorian era, an age rich in noble sentiments, Mr. Strachey found them all animated by the passions which have from of old urged men to seek reputation in the forum or the cannon's mouth. It looks like a libel, but it might be the truth.

Certainly it is unwise to assume that disinterested motives alone are the key to the activities of public persons. Least of all should the politician be allowed to clothe himself in a cloud of philanthropic verbiage. For it is the custom of his profession to offer something attractive to those who support him. And since the future is full of unrealized possibilities, he naturally turns to it as the realm for investment of men's expectations and hopes. No one can contradict him on the ground of fact, for the unknown is all before him where to choose. Calculate consequences, say that effects follow causes, quote to him history, remind him of its logic and he fortifies himself in the entrenchments of hope, behind the palisade of 'You never can tell'. He means well and, like About Ben Adhem, loves his fellow men.

Unfortunately it is not sufficient even to be disinterested.

THE GUIDES

important as this may be. The disasters brought about by well meaning persons make a lugubrious chapter in human records. Careless of the complicated web in which life, industry, health, independence, self-respect are all bound together, they work at the one corner seen, oblivious of the effects upon the whole. St. Francis is enamoured of charity, and fills the highways with greedy friars. To see the concatenation of events, to trace the consequences of an action, a law, a judicial decision, and their effects upon society, the individual or the mass—this is the real qualification for the legislator. And men dowered with such gifts and habits of mind, aware of the uncertainty of things, prudent because they know the danger, are usually careful to make themselves secure, slow to plunge into the mêlée of public affairs. Hence the first-rate intellects seldom take kindly to the public stage, and amongst the second and third ranks the standard of disinterestedness is seldom high. Moderate faculties, a quick rather than brooding eye, will serve as well or better there. Burke wearied his audience. Tocqueville was lost in the gins and traps of political intrigue. Mill was a finishing governess amidst a crowd of racing touts.

For the ordinary politician is concerned, naturally enough, with his career. He desires distinction, a reward immediate and tangible. Gladstone recognized and commended this disposition. We cannot blame him. He fits himself into his world, adapts himself to his surroundings, is no more of an unscrupulous egotist than his fellows, but is certainly no model of sacrificial devotion. And it is too much to expect that such men should redeem an age, uplift a nation, save the State. In this country the standard of public life is relatively high, but this does not mean that he who chooses a public career is prepared to play the martyr for a cause. Disraeli spoke of having climbed the greasy pole. Birkenhead addressing University students spoke of the glittering prizes awaiting the public man. Such words shock the conscience

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

of the tender minded. They are the words of brave men, refusing to be deceived.

The real task of the public man is to guard the treasure, material and moral, already acquired and to increase it for the common good. Through his labours the people may be made more acute in mind, less addicted to thoughtless expectations and impossible desires. Then their representatives also will partake of the general character, prove themselves a little better than was expected. Though they do but don the robe and speak the tongue of virtue, they may to that extent be better men and more useful servants of the common weal. But that they should be disinterested as the saint, courageous as the hero, is to ask too much of common clay. Yet the high purpose and the noble aim should be known, admired and pursued. And the popular mind is right in demanding that its leaders should be animated by some finer motive than that which stirs the usurer and the broker in their legitimate but by no means holy avocations. For otherwise the people fall under the despotism of the political trickster, and the Senate becomes the Temple, polluted by common sharpers and cheats.

In estimating the possibilities of real freedom in a democracy one must know something of the personal tyrannies which may threaten it. Chief of these is the ambitious careerist. Always with men, from Alcibiades to Mirabeau, from Cleon to Jack Wilkes and beyond, he is one of the recurring figures of the political scene. The new democracy may provide him with a specially favourable arena and an easier entrance to the stage. The increase of universities, cheapening of education, has produced a larger crop of young men whose thoughts turn naturally to public life, and the young lions may roar and suffer hunger. A thousand young Broughams are waiting their call where a century ago there was one, and the Utopian must realize that politics now more than ever means not only measures but men. In

THE GUIDES

the days of Walpole the House was bought, everyone knew it. No such organized bribery exists now, but he knows little of mankind who imagines that with the change of form the thing itself has disappeared. Since the people believe that all social improvement must come from the Government they look to their political leader to help in effecting this end. Should he fail them, his tenure of the position will be brief as inglorious. Hence a kind of political blackmail, which can only be met adequately by adroit use of the method of the confidence man, the issue of ever larger promissory notes on the future in the form of higher wages, shorter hours, larger subsidies and whatever else his constituents may ask for. In his use of these methods the careerist is no more to be blamed than the cheap furrier or jeweller who exaggerates the worth of his goods, but the democracy which takes his words at their face value is likely to be deceived. There are more ways than one of selling gold bricks.

Of a different colour but not less dangerous is the intransigent idealist. In all great societies there are persons who focus in themselves the notions, theories, dreams which help to transfigure the drabness of ordinary life. Without such notions and such persons there could be no improvement in conduct or advance in knowledge. But as intransigent, uncompromising claimant for immediate fulfilment of the full programme, he is at once a nuisance and a danger. For him there is no middle way between bloody massacre and impotent pacifism, Devil's Island and the opening of all prison doors, murderous usury and community of goods. He is the all or nothing man, generous to a fault with other people's money, ruthless in his search for the perfection of which he dreams, marching over corpses to the Heavenly City, whilst his disciples wait for the tumbrils, and ascending the scaffold with the certainty that alone of all the human race he knows the ultimate truth and the way to universal happiness. Wise men shun him, for he is dangerous to

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

himself and others, and to democracy he is a perpetual menace, driving the people to the feet of a Caesar, a Napoleon. He has sought perfection and has forgotten that politics is always the art of the second best.

Hardly less dangerous to democracy may be the influence of the scientific expert as an intruder into political realms. 'Learn to calculate and to disbelieve', the fundamentals of all true education, may be as needful a counsel in dealing with the expert as with the bookmaker or the soothsayer. In a day when the old magics are revived and the astrologer is abroad in the land, when vitamins are a superstition and calories a form of invocation to the unknown deity, democracy will need to be on guard against all those who from the cloister of a specialized study propose universal remedies for human ills or dogmatize on themes outside their chosen province. Of the value of his special work only his peers and rivals can judge, and their verdict is usually right. But of the expert as political adviser, as projector and promoter, the plain man may have a sound opinion. And he will not forget that the measurement of inanimate bodies having no volition of their own, subject to pressure from without, is different from the management of human groups; that in men there is always the incalculable element, apart from skyey and terrene influences, which makes of him a variable factor in every sum. Consequently the imaginary commonwealth, constructed according to statistical tables, lucid in form as a problem of Euclid worked by a skilled geometriician, may have but the slightest relation to that actual rough business of governing men which is the real purpose of politics. The more adventurous of these priests of the new religion would plot the outline of human destiny with the certainty of an accountant doing an audit, but they seldom allow for the unknown and the unlooked for, the bolt from the blue. Said J. Pierpont Morgan: 'When I want an expert I hire one for two hundred dollars, but I don't permit him to

THE GUIDES

run my business for me.' Democracy will need to learn from the man of money that useful lesson.

But by far the greatest peril threatening a democracy is the creation of a permanent Executive which comes by a natural process of evolution to rule the Legislature. This is Bureaucracy, the rule of the men of the desk. It dominated Byzantium, ruled China, and had much to do with the collapse of France. It seeks centralization, regulation of all things by form, annihilation of local independence, the subversion of all the spontaneous activities of the village and the small town and the small man in the interest of large inclusive schemes which can be handled from the centre. In time of war free discussion sinks to its lowest level, the man of action supplants the man of thought, and the official very properly becomes the servant of the soldier or the militant politician. Knowing the routine the official has the reins in his hand, and soon the power of free debate has gone, since the work is done or will be done by the executive body. And it is here that democracy, Parliamentary rule, may cease to function.

There are circumstances which make this a real danger to British democracy. Men of the older political school had at least this virtue, that they were little in terror of the officials, having been brought up with the knowledge of how they are made, and at times being quite capable, as in the case of Peel and Gladstone, of doing the official's work as well as himself or better. As the new men are more than ever drawn from the class which has little experience of administration, the politician will tend increasingly to be the pupil, with a permanent official as the tutor. All this is the more dangerous as the official hierarchy tends to become the victim of fixed ideas, doctrinaire judgments, or the devotee of some particular cult of economics. The official body then tends to become a closed corporation, not without an eye to its own interests, and the furtherance of its favoured cult;

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

encouragement is given to the natural desire to strengthen its own position, functional and financial, at the expense of the taxpayer, and thus to set a standard within the safe enclosure of Government employ, not easily to be copied in the open field of competitive industry. The dangers of bureaucracy are real. The inclination to make work, where work could with advantage be reduced in time and toil; the absence of the gainful motive, leading with the private trader to reduction of expenses; the deliberate increase of formalism, the careful avoidance of personal responsibility, the elevation of trifles into important matters, the dead weight upon dispatch and decision; are characteristics, all too well known, of the bureaucratic mind. The war is apology sufficient for all things. The accumulation of forms, the heaping up of masses of printed paper was necessary. But if we would live as free men we must dismiss all this into limbo when the crisis is over. The bureaucrat seeks safety, for himself and his employers. But safety can never be the first consideration for the free man. And the British civil service, the best in the world, may by its very virtues be a peril to democracy, since it may teach the people the advantages of having all things decided and done for them, rather than the courage and wisdom of doing something for themselves.

Equally important is it that democracy should be on guard against the sycophant of the crowd. The Courts of monarchs are supposed to develop a particular kind of hypocrisy amongst those who frequent them. Their vices have been noted by keen eyes and recorded by fluent pens in the Courts of our own Elizabeth, the Georges and Victoria, Philip of Spain, Peter of Russia and Catherine, Frederick of Prussia and Louis XIV of France. There is plenty of material there for the sharpest of satirists and the most bitter of misanthropes. There we may learn once more that power flies, with consequent inflammation, to the head, and indurates the heart. To

THE GUIDES

be daily likened to the sun and adored as a god is a treatment corrosive of all comradeship with ordinary humanity, and fatal to the humility of the saintliest. And the contemptuous pride of the autocrat is only equalled by the subservience of his adulators. From all this the democratic system sets men free, and the cringing flattery of the courtier is replaced by the bold independence of the citizen. Thus speak the advocates of government by and for the people.

But that is not quite the whole truth. For the multitude may become a tyrant in its turn and he who would control it must flatter that he may rule. Then life becomes difficult for the political adventurer, unless he has the pliant knee, the pleading voice, of the suppliant. In 1793 the galleries of the Convention were thronged with the fierce faces and flaming eyes of the gutter scum of Paris and it was to these, as well as to their fellow deputies that Danton, St. Just, and Robespierre had to address themselves if they would ride the whirlwind or save their necks. Happily those scenes are rare, but even in times of serenity the political aspirant or leader must know how to please with soothing words the captious crowd of his auditors. It is hard then, and they know it best who have resented it most, to keep the truth before one's eyes, to hold the balance even, to be fair to the enemy and just to the friend. And even more difficult may it be to be just to oneself. For the politician should be not only the advocate but the counsellor of the people; not their delegate but their leader. And if he is to do their bidding, to adapt himself to their changing moods, always to flatter, never to correct, to subordinate his knowledge to their ignorance, his wisdom to their folly, in what is he better than the minion of an autocrat, the flunkey of a drunken king? It is this posture of the politician with his ear to the ground, this eavesdropping for hints as to the newest popular fantasy, which rots the moral quality of the political man, transforms him into the eunuch of the polling booth. A democracy

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

whose leaders dare not tell it the truth, will not oppose it when they know it to be wrong, shiver at its frown and live only in its smiles, may think to be making a tent for the living whilst it is weaving a shroud for the dead.

All this might argue that there is something radically wrong with democracy, especially where Parliaments are concerned, and that the only thing to do is to try some other method. But this would be a mistake. What has to be remembered is that there are no ideal systems of Government and never will be, but that Parliamentary democracy, worked with a proper sense of its inevitable limitations and immense powers for good, is the best system for the management of men, with a view to the long-term interests of the whole community, that has been invented. And the democrat needs to keep himself constantly aware of the possible weaknesses of the system and on guard against its potential deceptions, that he may help to draw from it all the vast good that it may in time produce for men.

If the doctrinaire, the man obsessed with a particular theory, attempts to use it for the furtherance of his own ideas and pushes those ideas beyond a certain point he will either fail and disappear, as countless politicians have disappeared like snow; or he will break Parliamentary democracy and transform it into a dictatorship of the Left or the Right, as with Hitler and Mussolini; or he will sicken and disgust the intelligent men of the community with the idea of democracy, and there will be a reversion to the older systems of personal monarchy, or a powerful oligarchy of ruthless and dominant men, fighting for power against the interests of the mass.

Hitler and Mussolini have for a time held the stage as opponents of democracy. To the lover of political drama they were interesting as front-rank figures of the contemporary stage. But to the student they are interesting as embodying the ideal of the doctrinaire, the man who carries his idea to the extreme point, exaggerates it that he may see it in its

THE GUIDES

fullest development. They were both socialists. Nazism and Fascism are both expressions of the common notion that the welfare of the historic community rules all considerations pertaining to the individual, that he does literally exist for the community, the State. And these systems are socialism in action, not as men see it in their dreams, a community working in harmony inspired by affection for each other, but as it and all such ideals work themselves out in actual life when gripped by men capable of using them for their own ends. Nay, at first such men do not think of their own ends; they may be enthusiasts, loyal in spirit to the idea. Their treason comes later, when power has touched them, poisoned them. Then they become the tyrants who disturb and terrify mankind.

It is against this development, in all its forms, that Parliamentary democracy guards the citizen, and it is for this that wise men cherish it as the best of all political inventions up to this time.

Our generation thinks of Nazism and Fascism in their later developments, when they have driven to an extreme point certain notions implied in their original theories. We see them as the agencies through which unscrupulous men have furthered their ambitious designs and satisfied their sadistic greed. But originally they embodied the ideas of National Socialism, founded upon the doctrines of Fichte and Hegel as philosophers, on the dialectic of Marx and the teaching of Engels and Lassalle and List. They carried this doctrine over into practical politics and used it as the intellectual basis of a revolution. An abstract theory is made the basis of a social transformation and the pedestal of a personal ambition, an ambition which becomes ever more expansive with every stage of its march to power.

National Socialism has for its aim the strengthening of the nation, in its biological and economic struggle with other nations. To this end it eschews all the cloudy notions of

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

universal fraternity, internationalism, human well being, which are found in the current socialisms of the modern world. Yet in its original idea it belongs to their order of thought. In each and all the dominant idea is that the community is in all things ruler of the individual, that he himself, his goods, property, talents, toils are the possession of the community to be used for its benefit. The State is exalted and the citizen is depressed. There is no generous giving of superfluous energy, talent, wealth, to the service of the community. Since all is owed and nothing is possessed there can be no question of giving or withholding. The relation is the same as that suggested in religion between man and God: when you have done all things you are but an unprofitable servant.

Against this the liberal minds of the world have protested and with reason. The doctrine must be challenged at its base, denied from the foundations. And the contrary position, positive, assertive, must be thrown into prominence; that the State is a human creation, made for the service of the community and therefore for the individual citizen, who may sit in judgment on the State and its instruments and compel them to justify their existence. And it is for this reason that modern man may look with curious eyes at all those proposals which, apparently harmless and unimportant, may yet hold the promise or threat of the development which we have seen in Germany and Italy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

PERHAPS the mistake made by those who are certain that democracy holds the key to life's problems lies in forgetting the permanent factors, those which remain outside of human control. In building up a defence against the immediate consequences of Darwinian teaching, which seemed to stress the need for conflict in all life as the agent for discovering those types and individuals which were qualified to survive, the humanitarian thinkers urged the presence and power of mind. The struggle on the animal plane was real, they admitted, but where mind came into play it was possible to evade the struggle, to rise above it and to create a world in which the higher faculties and the nobler emotions might prove themselves the controlling forces. Hunger and sex are the driving powers on the animal plane, but above this there is scope for regulating law, compassion, sympathy and love as the motive forces in the creation of a new and better order of society.

With this attitude, which in a hundred variations has been the inspiration of the humanitarian efforts of the last hundred years, most of the intellectual classes are in sympathy. From it there is born much of the social and philanthropic work of the time and it lies behind the protective, sanative and regulative legislation of the period. But it is a serious error to suppose that this takes man out of the evolutionary process, gives him the mastery of natural laws, save within narrow limits; or justifies the current belief that he can control the evolutionary process in the interests of his own ideals and purposes. The permanent and irreducible factors remain, and any legislation or social activity which ignores these, either in their present reality or in their future and potential

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

actuality, is likely to come to grief on the shoals and breakers of the fact.

Put into the concrete this means that we are still very much what winds and waters make us. The conditions of geographical situation remain. Climate still exercises its influence upon the individual and the species; nearness to the Equator or to the Poles is still an important element in the creation of a racial or national destiny. For the development of the higher types of humanity it is still necessary that there should be a fairly equable temperature, accessibility to warm waters and a reasonably productive soil. What we call civilization depends on these things and, however we may deride Buckle and his school, it is true that we do not go to the Esquimaux or to the Hottentot for the finer manifestations of human intelligence. And this is not a question of backward races, who could be brought level with the finer types by intercommunication. It is a matter of external conditions, sufficiently unfavourable to prohibit any of the higher developments of human faculty.

Think again of the skyey influences, of astronomical distances and times, of the infinitudes above and around us, of the inflexible laws which prevail there, so far as we can tell, and of the incalculable forces which are thus at every moment affecting the earth, its volcanoes, its icebergs, its high mountains; and again of the oceans with their tides, perhaps capable of being used in human service but certainly likely to remain permanently outside the range of complete control by human agency; and it becomes plain that all speculation about the future of mankind, the civilizations he may create, the social forms he may adopt, the conditions of his life on earth, must be made with the full recognition that each and all of these are subject to the external circumstances in which he finds himself and are vassal to all devouring time. This is a theme at once so trite and so disturbing that for the most part we are even agreed not to

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

think about it, but to proceed with our planning of the human habitation as though the facts it represents did not exist. And there is much to be said for such a temper. But it is well to remember that the permanent factors remain, for if we forget we act as the man who builds upon the sand within sight and sound of the sea only to see his house engulfed by the waves.

Equally dangerous is it to forget those other permanent factors which are found in the instincts, habits, proclivities of the human race. Doubtless great changes may be made in the mood and temper of mankind, so that the slave or baron of twelfth-century England might hardly recognize their descendants in the artisan and peer of to-day. But it is probable that the deep-rooted impulses of the human creature remain much the same throughout historic time, and at bottom there are more likenesses than differences between prehistoric and civilized man, likenesses which reveal themselves with blinding clearness whenever the outward conditions are so changed as to bring the civilized man nearer to the physical situation of his ancestral relative.

It has been a cardinal error, when considering the possibilities of human progress, to forget this and to assume that, because of some momentary success in mastering by obeying the natural laws by some group or nation, therefore for humanity as a whole and under all conditions the same victory could be won. Democracy existing under favourable conditions, at a specially favourable moment of time, may be led through its leaders to suppose that its victory is a foretaste only of what may be enjoyed by all peoples in all circumstances, careless alike of the massed forces without and the subterranean energies compressed within the human creature.

Take, as an example of the influence of the permanent factors, that of climate. One of the points of history which every schoolboy remembers is the surge and sweep of the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

Goths and Vandals upon ancient Rome, the conclusion of a long series of efforts on the part of the Roman people to hold the fort against the barbarians of the North. But this is only the most striking instance of something which has been going on ever since, intermittently, and which is recognized as a permanent element in the greater politics of Europe, the drive to the South. Italy, the land where the citron grows, has always tempted the Northern nations, and Frank and Teuton have been inclined to push South into its fertile plains. For the same reason there has always been a fear of Russia in the German mind, for the urge South of the Slav might carry the German in its sweep. And for how many years were our own people obsessed, not without reason, by the fear that Russia might seize Constantinople and come to control the Dardanelles? For the cold winds of the North kill or invigorate the human creature and the warm sun of the South tends to enfeeble, to enervate those who enjoy it.

Or consider another example on a smaller scale. The Scottish people have won for themselves a well-deserved reputation as an adventurous and hardy race. Before Knox and the Presbyterian Church came to educate them, they were well known as military adventurers, serving in most of the Courts and armies of Europe. In later times they have travelled as emigrants to far lands and have done well there as citizens, industrialists, farmers, bankers and trusted agents. But why should they thus leave their native land? They are as patriotic as most, rather more so; have as keen a sense of the value of home and its surroundings as any Frenchman of the Loire valley. They travel because their own land is poor, its soil, save for the Lowlands, thin and infertile, giving but a poor livelihood to the small farmer, and offering no great field, outside of the industrial cities like Dundee or Glasgow, or Edinburgh its capital, for the vigorous minds and bodies of the race. Moor and hill and river make grand scenery and good cover for game and fish, but

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

they do not give large opportunities for personal advancement through the great industries. Hence the drive for the South, for the East, wherever there is work to be done and a fortune to be made. Some Scotsmen lament this, resent it as criminal on the part of their countrymen, an outrage on the national feeling. But it proceeds from the permanent elements lying in the nature of things. And whoever would understand the situation of man on this planet, as individual or community, and the possible methods of improving his lot, must accept these elemental considerations as fixed data, facts which will not be altered for all the wishing in the world.

Or think of another matter, often in the minds of reflective men to-day as one of the permanent factors, the population problem.

When men see that certain consequences follow, arising apparently from causes hidden in the circumstances, and that these consequences repeat themselves with slight variations or none, they incline to speak of what they call a natural law. Sometimes with a larger range of facts to draw upon it is found that the consequences do not always follow, or follow with considerable variations, then the theory of a natural law is discarded, or held tentatively, and men wait for further information before they proceed to generalize. Gravitation, the ether, nature abhors a vacuum, phlogiston are words which recall to everyone instances of the failure or success of this process of thought. Something like it is found in what used to be called the law of population. It was stated at first with some array of figures and in rather a positive manner, the chief writers on it saying that it could be formulated in the phrase: subsistence, the whole amount of available food, increased arithmetically as two plus two plus two equals six, and that population increased geometrically as two multiplied on two equals four and four multiplied on four equals sixteen. Later writers have derided this formula as inaccurate and misleading and not essential to the general

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

proposition, which is that in favourable circumstances the progeny of human beings tends to increase up to or beyond the bounds of subsistence. At one time this was held by many intelligent persons to be universally true and some of the conclusions drawn from it were not exhilarating, so that humanists and philanthropists used to speak disrespectfully of the dismal science and treat contemptuously those who tried to elucidate the facts of economic life; whilst the religious people declared that where a new mouth came there was always something to put into it, a good doctrine for the individual but not one which the economist was bound to accept as part of his data in dealing with large masses and great communities.

Then came the nineteenth century and the revolution in industry brought about by machinery. The industrial development of that era was so rich and varied and its results so beneficial to Britain that it seemed to disprove all the predictions of the prophets. The immediate increase of population, multiplying itself by three and even four times, could not outstrip the wealth-producing agencies brought into life by the application of science to natural resources. Twelve millions in 1800 and forty millions in 1900 with a present population of forty-five millions might have justified the worst forebodings of those who had spoken of the danger of over population. But the wealth of Britain, her growing trade, the purchase of foodstuffs from all over the globe, with free imports of corn, gave a high standard of living to the masses and seemed to promise an ever-increasing prosperity to the British people, whilst allowing the most hopeful views concerning the future of mankind. There would always be more industry, wealth, food, clothes, shelter to meet the ever-expanding need.

But the snake in the grass had not been killed. Lord Morley complained that social reformers would not treat seriously the secret peril threatening every builder of ideal

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

States and 'azure towns'. In India the British Raj had enforced order, guaranteed security, promoted irrigation, and found itself confronted on occasion with multitudes dying of starvation. Even to-day there are stories of famine in the Hunan province of China, not merely because of the war but as a revival of the ancient scourge which threatens crowded Eastern lands. With any measure of good government, security, population tends to press upon the boundaries of subsistence.

Yet there would seem to be space enough left in the world, and one might dismiss with contempt the fears of those for whom already the earth is cluttered and crowded with human beings. Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Texas — these names do not suggest the stifling slums of big cities. And if the warm lands will not serve there are the frozen wastes of the Siberian plains, with which the Russians are doing such marvellous things, pressing ever nearer to the Polar ice and compelling these frostbound lands to yield food and light and warmth to multitudes of human creatures who once would have been helpless there as new-born babes. With such triumphs at one's hand one need not bother about the fear of overcrowding the planet for centuries to come! But then one remembers that in this year 1943 it is reported, on the basis of a White Paper just published, that India's population has increased by fifty millions in the last ten years, an increase greater than in any previous decade during the last fifty years. And one wonders for how long increasing literacy and increasing industrialization, along with scientific agriculture, can keep pace even in India with that phenomenal increase in the number of mouths to be fed.

And then the population question, as it affects living room, is never merely physiological: one must take account of the mentality, the dispositions and moods of people. Germany was not overcrowded as Belgium, and Britain with its four hundred persons to the square mile, may be said to be. But

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

the Germans wanted living room, which meant more land, colonies, space for expansion, the removal of barriers, and this is a mental state as well as a geographical problem. In fact it is the claim to wealth, to mines, coal, oil and the precious metals, and proceeds from the same elemental motive as that which causes the best land in any undeveloped region to be taken up first, with consequent effects upon the rent of other less useful or profitable land. So that to deal with this question there must be the same equipment of reasonable interpreters of the existing laws, policemen for enforcing the laws, protection for existing holders, and the firm warning that trespassers will be prosecuted but that consideration will be given to special claims. And it is these natural but ever-expanding desires of men and nations, as well as the food difficulty, which make the population problem dangerous, a potential cause of wars or the threat of wars.

On balance, then, it seems to be true that population tends in favourable circumstances to press upon the bounds of subsistence. There will be variations, and it is not possible to formulate the laws with exactitude, but the concealed threat is there. And the publicist and the politician must try to deal with it. Clearly the sensible course is to proportion your expenditure to your income, to keep the population within bounds or to increase your means of subsistence. Both these courses are being followed and have been for some years. The scientists are extending the boundaries of subsistence, increasing the fertility of the soil, the authorities are seeking to bring more land into cultivation; whilst for many years a campaign was carried on by worthy people urging the application of a moral check to the production of large families, all done with the fervour of the missionary who carries his gospel to the heathen. The aim was to find the balance between population and food, and it was hoped that this could be done by the inculcation of self-restraint as one of the higher virtues. Then the situation changed, as

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

in a night. For the positive check was found and soon became the common knowledge and property of all the citizens. With the advent of this new agent in the service of civilization it seemed that the individual was delivered from a fear which had often harassed him or her, the arrival of unwanted burdens. It was a real emancipation and the younger generation was not slow to avail itself of it and the freedom it brought.

But there was another agency at work. Insurance against old age, against unemployment, had become the rule in these islands and in some other lands. Medical services improved, so that the mass of the people had a much better chance of living out their seventy years or more than previously. And it is these two forces working together at the extreme ends of human life which have produced the situation in which we are to-day. For to the complaint that our country is threatened with overcrowding the answer now is that the very reverse of this is true, the real trouble being that the race is not reproducing itself in sufficient numbers. At the present rate of increase, say the masters of statistics, it is likely that in sixty years the population of Britain will have dwindled from forty-five to twenty-five millions, the number of old men and women will have increased to ten millions and that of children will have decreased to about one third of the present total. And already the wiser folk are wondering what the end of such a tendency is likely to be. To the strictly orthodox reformer, bent on diminishing misery and poverty, this seems to offer the prospect of an ideal situation. Many jobs waiting and few hands to work at them means high wages for the worker, a new sense of self-respect. Some such thought as this has led the men and women of this generation to make it plain that neither bonuses, nor improved dwellings, nor shorter hours, nor higher wages will persuade them to become, what they believe their parents to have been too often, the slaves of the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

family, kept down and tied to toil by the too frequent appearance of the baby.

And yet, however this may work out for the individual, it is useless and vain when applied to the social community, claiming its right to exist, grow and hold itself intact in the world of to-day. For without a population increasing, doing more than merely supply the vacancies caused by death, there is the danger of collective defeat and extinction by other societies whose members still have the courage to reproduce themselves. The defeat of France had many causes, but one, said Marshal Pétain, was that there were not enough babies. And it is here that Nature seems to offer to men one of those dilemmas before which it is so difficult to choose, yet before which a choice must be made, between the inconveniences and possible miseries of overcrowding and the danger of collective annihilation.

This explains why our leaders are now telling us that a family of five children should be the rule for all. They point to this as a necessity, not because they are concerned about 'cannon fodder' in the old Napoleonic and Bismarckian fashion, but because without this addition to the average family there will soon come a time when the majority of people in these islands will be old rather than young, because there are the great lands of the Empire still waiting to be populated and cultivated, and because unless there is some change in the marital and parental habits of the people it will be impossible for our nation and race to maintain its position in the world. Yet doles and subsidies, cradle money and parental endowments, have left the core of the matter untouched. The races which honour age, retain parental authority and responsibility, like the Chinese, have many children, the indigent and illiterate poor of the great cities may still have large families, whilst the peasant of Connaught and the Highland crofter's wife may still add considerably to the numbers of the population; but where the State under-

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

takes ever more responsibility for the child, where the teacher is supplanting the parent and society at large is seriously undertaking the role of godparent to every child, the number of children born steadily diminishes. Never was so much done to welcome and encourage the young life of the nation, and the more the baby is adored the scarcer he becomes.

What can one say then but this: that perhaps the nature of things cares little enough about our conventions, our schemes of education for everybody, our assurance of progressive improvement for the human race by the substitution of political control for the responsibility of parentage; and that the nation which cannot or will not breed cannot defend its possessions and will be robbed of them, despite all the expostulations of moralists, by those who are strong enough and bold enough to confront life and its perils on their own initiative.

But is there not some condition of equipoise, some point at which the community may safely say that, a stationary population once attained, it ought to be preserved in that state of balance and harmony? Unfortunately the nature of things seems to be against the permanence of any such situation. The sensible private citizen balances his outgoings with his income and thus keeps himself secure, whilst enjoying the felicity to be drawn from spending his income. But does that continue for long? On the contrary, the man who spends up to the measure of his income, though he may not be extravagant, is always in danger from the arrival of unexpected demands or the sudden failure of some source of supply. And the nation, like the individual, must create a reserve. In a perfectly safe world the cradle and the cemetery may be held in equilibrium, the new life merely filling the vacancies caused by death. But where is the safe world? Certainly not here. And again the doctrine of safety first, that refuge of the timid, may prove more dangerous than the boldest of gambles in the lottery of life. France

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

and the Scandinavian lands have tried it, and have proved that it does not pay. If then a nation fixes its standard of life so high that in order to maintain it the citizens refuse the burden of parentage, if women become so enamoured of the culture and refinements of civilization that they refuse to bear children, that nation will either have to fall back on the use of mercenary soldiers, after Carthage and the later Rome, or accept defeat at the hands of its rivals. These are permanent factors in the evolution of human life and the men who ignore them or think to sidetrack them whilst engaging in the task of shaping the destiny of a nation are likely to be amongst the dangerous counsellors of mankind.

There is another instance of the permanent factor which should not be forgotten. We have been told that the application of science to the soil must bring about an immense increase in production, and some of the triumphs recorded in this connection are a startling proof of what the human mind can accomplish with collective effort. But it has long been known that the law of diminishing returns must still be reckoned with, and there are many farmers in Canada and America and some in our own land who are discovering this for themselves. There is nothing abstruse about this law. By applying manure to the soil the product of the soil can be increased, and there is a direct ratio between the amount and quality of fertilizer used and the resulting crop. Up to a given point this holds good, other things being equal, with absolute certainty. But beyond that point the results change. The returns fall rather than rise, and the farmer finds that he may continue to spend increasing sums on food for the soil, and yet reap smaller instead of larger harvests as compared with his expenditure. He has reached that point where it is wasteful to spend more on fertilizer than the amount which will procure for him the maximum profit he has hitherto gained. This means that the soil cannot be made indefinitely more and more productive, that there is a limit

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

set by Nature herself, and that he has reached the line of diminishing returns.

It is common knowledge that farming in Canada and America has many illustrations of this. The farmer tilled virgin soil, used modern methods on the grand scale, sowed wheat by the hundredweight and reaped it by the ton, trusting to the winter snow for fertilizer, keeping few cattle and treating animal dung as mere waste. Frequently he made a fortune. Then came Nature's revenge, drought, dust storms, sterility in the soil. Diminishing returns had arrived. Mr. A. G. Street, who knows farming at first hand, has told the world that the system was wrong, will have to be altered, that ultimately the farmer in the Americas and Canada will have to fall back on the same system as prevails in Britain, cattle and corn, the beast supplying what is taken out of the soil. No one doubts that the chemist can do much, and the phosphates and nitrogens and ammonias which he extracts or composes are precious additions to the agriculturist's armoury, but Nature will not be permanently tricked, and every working man who has grown parsnips and carrots on his allotment soon learns what the big-scale farmer of the prairies has had to learn, that there are limits to earth's productive power and sharp conditions for all who would grow food, one of them being that he recognize and adapt himself to the law of diminishing returns.

This is true of industry as of agriculture. As the mine becomes deeper, the coal, gold, diamonds, iron or what not, further removed from the surface, the costs of production are increased, the wages bill is higher whilst the result in ore, precious metals and the rest is increasingly out of proportion to the risks and costs involved. Every company promoter and mining engineer understands this and regulates his actions accordingly, never, if he is honest, concealing the fact that he is dealing in a wasting asset, and that diminishing returns must be expected and prepared for. Similarly in

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

business. Given something which is cheap, which everybody can use with some advantage to the user, a new soap, a cosmetic, a motor car or bicycle, and the more it is advertised all the world over, the larger will probably be the returns, so that it is true, in these circumstances, that it pays to advertise. It may be assumed that the vendors of patent medicines know what they are doing when they spend thousands every year on advertising space in the press and on hoardings. Until they have reached the limits of publicity there is increasing profit to be made by selling pills and potions. But if the object for sale is a new kind of glass eye, or improved artificial limb, or a special boot for the club footed, the limits of profitable advertising will soon be reached and diminishing returns will show that this is happening, since there is all the world over only a limited public who suffer from club feet or amputated limbs or use artificial eyes. And the principle runs through all and every industry, that the sales expenses must be proportioned to the potential public, or diminishing returns will result.

Does it not go further, apply to such almost abstract things as education and culture? It is a favourite notion that the more we spend on education the better the results are sure to be, but this does not always follow. Chesterfield gave his son the best education that could be bought for money and in addition wrote for him the famous Letters, with the hope of making him the most polished and cultivated gentleman in Europe, and all the efforts were wasted because the material was not in the pupil to begin with. Charles Fox was educated in the most expensive manner, finishing with pocketfuls of money and a tour on the Continent where his father expressly told him that he must learn to play high, win and lose money with grace. Result, a noble intellect and a generous heart spoiled by bad character, and the greatest debater since Demosthenes is remembered chiefly as a gambler soaked in claret and brandy. Many an Aber-

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

donian and Edinburgh man has done better with his bag of oatmeal, and Hugh Miller reflects more credit on his schools and schoolmasters than scores of Eton and Balliol men who have never been anything but faint echoes of their preceptor Jowett.

Which of us can read without compassion the story of Edward VII's education by a good and kind but misunderstanding father? To compel a boy with little sense of the abstract, no inclination for purely intellectual studies, to read books and perform tasks in which he did not shine, and for which he had no aptitude, no taste, whilst ignoring the qualities of visual observation, of robust good sense and innate kindliness which were certainly marked in him, is but one more instance of the innumerable blunders made by parents, teachers, philanthropists and reformers who will persist in trying to mould human beings after their own image or after some ideal of their own which they imagine ought to fit the majority of the whole human race. And the returns are likely to be a steadily diminishing quantity as this notion grips the collective mind and animates those who will increasingly have control of the masses of modern youth. Those who demand education on the largest scale for everybody without consideration of cost, or recognition of the innate disqualification of many useful persons to receive or profit by such training, will find that there too the rule holds good. For Nature will not depart far from the mean for all our wishing. Education must be proportioned to the intelligence receiving it, and the self-denial and concentration of mind and will by which it is won against social and monetary difficulties may be an important element in the training of every man who is to use his accomplishments with advantage to himself and mankind.

These things need to be remembered when we are told that milk and bread and meat, with desirable accessories and all of the best quality, can be provided for everybody in

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

the world without difficulty; and that every kind of learning must be placed within easy reach of every human being, without any serious expenditure of effort on the part of the recipient. But unless all explorers and naturalists and biologists who tell us how Nature works are wrong, there is no such handy method of filling all the mouths, real and potential, which crave for food. A burst or a famine, abundant life and wide spreading death, with a ruthless process of selection always at work, is part of the economy of nature. Doubtless the squirrels, rats and weasels might find life rich and full if the owl, the hawk, and the falcon were removed finally from the scene, but in the world we know they also have their place.

Present-day thought treats with scorn this ancient bogey, basing its contempt on the comfortable theory that already the earth produces more than humanity can consume, dwelling on instances of coffee being destroyed by the ton because a market cannot be found for it, or oranges being thrown overboard because transport costs are too high, or the market price is too low. On which the novelist dilates on the folly of capitalists and the stupidity of mankind, seeing that nothing is required but a simple distributive system for the whole world, a co-operative brains-trust, with power to handle all goods produced everywhere, and every human being could live in comfort under his own vine and fig tree. Popular science and fiction have created the belief that nothing is required for the promotion of universal happiness, bananas and coconuts for everybody, but this simple transformation of the old wicked system of profit-making commerce into this new method of equitable distribution, a process which could be brought about to-morrow if only the world would allow common sense and human decency to rule things as they should be ruled. And at the same time these teachers of mankind stress the point that each of the two thousand millions of human beings on the planet is to

THE PERMANENT FACTORS

be treated as a free and independent person, with all the rights of personality, amongst others the right to be wilful, obstinate, egoistic, pushful and energetic in seeking the gratification of his or her own personal desires, for unless these things are made possible then democracy has not realized itself and the human being is not really free.

It is of little avail to point out to them that the existing system by which goods are exchanged and the industry and trade of the world is carried on has at least this singular merit, that it has grown up with the human race, has been chosen by them or has been forced upon them by circumstances, and that there is such a thing as the unity of history, by which the generations are joined together, so that the conduct of each age is to a large extent regulated, through the law of cause and effect, by that which has been done by their predecessors. And further, that there are few things more dangerous or difficult than the effort to break this thread of history, and force upon a nation or race, not to speak of the whole human family, some system which may be admirable to the abstract thinker, but with which, for a thousand reasons, the mass of mankind will have nothing to do. But these are reflections for which the universal Projector has little inclination, since they might tend to make him less eloquent in defence of whatever scheme for extracting sunshine from cucumbers he may have in hand.

CHAPTER IX

SECURITY

IT is in the light of these permanent factors that men must consider the claims now made for economic security, the certainty that they may, in spite of political convulsions and military threatenings, remain possessed of their guaranteed wage or salary, medical attendance in sickness, help in distress, and the annuity or pension which will protect them in old age. The men who promise these things are animated by the best motives, but even they might admit that it is a large order.

Security may be argued for as part of a concerted effort to bring certain forms of legislation into line with religious values and precepts. But this disposition to correlate political proposals with religion needs to be watched. For in the modern world the State is regarded as a secular institution. Whether this is the right or the final judgment on such a matter is not the question. It is the attitude of the modern educated man throughout Europe. Parliamentarians in Britain can therefore no longer make any religious creed the criterion of a political proposal. All such proposals are debated in the light of answers to certain queries, such as: Is the change likely to be beneficial? Is it practicable? Do the people consciously will this change? For the Commons is a secular assembly met to discuss the affairs of a secular State, of which affairs security, its utility, its feasibility, may at any time be one.

Or the case may be argued on strictly financial grounds. Arithmeticians may criticize the proposals for the reason that they involve a standing charge upon the Exchequer; may point out that there is a difference between lending a relative one hundred pounds and undertaking to provide him with

SECURITY

one hundred per annum for life. The latter involves the present and future solvency of the benefactor, possible changes in money values, alterations in the respective situations of benefactor and beneficiary and all the reasons which may actuate a cautious person in accepting or refusing a permanent liability. There is a further consideration. Ordinary prudence suggests that when deeply involved with creditors the first thing to do is to get out of debt. Applied to national finance this is a disputed point but, as a preference, one might choose the old method of paying up, though in recent years the custom of bilking one's creditors has been much honoured.

At the end of the war the obligations of Britain will be at least £20,000,000,000. The service of this debt has been put by competent writers at anything between 450 and 600 millions. By service of the debt one understands the payment of the interest due. There may be some hidden reference to a Sinking Fund but it is not overtly stated. And even if it were one would remember that Adam Smith has noted that Sinking Funds are seldom applied, wholly or in the greater part, to the purpose for which they were intended. The idea seems to be that so long as the interest is paid the existence of the debt gives no cause for anxiety. This might well prove bad finance.

The reason given is that speedy repayment would have a deflationary effect, by which one understands that the price of goods would be lowered, the value of money raised. This is not necessarily dangerous, especially if the process is graduated. Cheap money has not been an unmixed blessing. It has filled the heads of projectors with schemes for the promotion of benefits to everybody at negligible cost and, with a 50 per cent income tax, it affords no adequate reward for abstinence, which is the prime agent in the creation of capital. It has led intelligent men to forget that financial figures, if they are honest, even though as in recent years

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

they become astronomical, are still figures and have as such an objective reality, the pound being still a pound though its purchasing power may vary within a range of 50 per cent above or below in the exchanges of the world. And that colossal figure of debt which stands against the name of the British Government is supposed to be paid in pounds or the equivalent of pounds sterling.

Surely then it may be suggested that the primary obligation of the Government at the end of the war will be to secure the national defences, then to proceed to repayment of the immense burden of debt which the nation will be carrying. That it is an internal debt should be no excuse for the indefinite postponement of this duty. The notion that the nation is a vast family and that inter-family indebtedness is not a serious matter will not hold water. Men are individuals; if the family is going to ruin then the shrewder ones of the family will wish to get out if they can, will draw on the family exchequer, which holds all the cash in the form of Saving Certificates and the rest, and will seek security elsewhere. And the result will be bankruptcy or something near it. Let it be known that repayment is on the way, that work and saving for this end are going on and the family exchequer is to that extent saved. Service of the debt should then go much beyond 600 millions and must imply some effort at repayment.

One element in the proposed security is the provision of insurance for all, irrespective of income or social position, through State action. This again must be argued on the ground of expediency: is the work already being done by societies within the State? Will it be done better or as well under a State regime? Is not the credit of the State already sufficiently pledged by its existing commitments? In present practice the business of insurance has been carried to a high degree of success by private enterprise. The suggestion is that the larger part of this business is now ripe—happy word

SECURITY

—for taking over by the State. That the work will be done better is highly doubtful, that it will be done as well is questionable. Here as elsewhere the tendency will be for bureaucracy to take the place of intelligent and vigorous direction. The new agents of the State will ultimately press, as the Post Office and the various branches of the Civil Service are pressing, for affiliation with organized labour, thus increasing their potential strength against the time when it may be used, always with the threat of a General Strike in the background, to press upon the Government such political proposals as they may approve. Then there is the possibility that in a proportion of cases the insured citizen, the incentive to self-denial being removed, having the certainty that the insurance business is managed and supported by the State, will throw the major portion of the burden upon the State, that is upon the taxpayers. For we are all the time creating the mentality which assumes instinctively that the responsibility for meeting every mischance rests upon the community and not upon the individual citizen.

And here the moralist, for even in a secular State the moralist has his place, may make his voice heard and ask whether it is expedient in morals that the State should relieve every citizen of the task of making some preparation for bad times, old age, and death. And he may remind us that the purpose of legislation is not merely to enact a series of statutory prohibitions, but to develop in the citizen an independent and critical mind, capable of individual judgment. And the tendency of paternal Government, of which State insurance is a particular example, is to treat the citizen as a child, to maintain him in a state of pupillage, as incapable as he is unwilling to sit in judgment upon the political tutors and masters for whom he is persuaded to vote.

Another element of this suggested security is the provision of a State Medical Service. As to this it is declared by the supporters of the scheme that the citizen has a right to health,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

which is as rational as saying that the citizen has a right to be six feet tall. The quarrel of the unhealthy is first of all with Nature, which may have been unkind. Doubtless Nature may be helped by improving the environment, through sanitation, housing, diet, and so on, whilst something may perhaps be accomplished in the selection of parents for prospective children; but when all this is done by the wisest and most compassionate of Governments there will remain the unknown quantity, that which decides that a particular person shall be healthy or diseased, complete or deformed, in spite of the worst surroundings or in defiance of the predictions founded upon the best. And the effect of Western civilization upon native races in the Pacific, in Africa and elsewhere should make the most optimistic of hygienists and eugenisists dubious about their remedies for human ills.

Nor can the unhealthy always escape from the quarrel with himself, though this is never to be urged when he asks for attention, since he may be guilty of folly in having caused in some measure his own sickness or debility. After all, the most generous of philanthropists must realize that there is such a thing as 'the morning after the night before'; that sobriety, temperance, chastity, air, light, soap and water, clean clothing, plain food and the use of these commodities, are all elements of a science or an art which is not difficult to explain, which can be easily learned but which is frightfully difficult to practise. For all these things help to make up that life of ordered routine, the balance between income and expenditure in physical experience which is the condition of health, and which is at the same time the cause of that ennui, boredom, sense of fatigue and disgust with life which drives multitudes of men and women to the breach of every rule laid down by the doctor and by common sense in the effort to escape from themselves, from the intolerable weariness of an existence which seems to lead nowhere and to mean nothing. Excitement, ill-temper, drunkenness, gluttony,

SECURITY

lechery may not be sins to the modern man, but every doctor knows that they are the means of escape from the accustomed, not merely amongst the idle rich who frequent the neurologist, but amongst all classes and grades of society for whom the customary routine has become the source of something akin to madness.

Certainly for the unfortunate who have suffered through the mischances of industry, for the victims of mismanagement or preventable cruelty, there can be felt nothing but compassion, and whatever can be done to ease their lot should be done at once. But it may fairly be questioned whether to effect this end it is necessary to institute a State Medical Service. Already there are hospitals, founded and maintained by the voluntary spirit, which place within the reach of every citizen the best medical service in the world. That the poorer class of patient receives all that money can procure in the way of luxury is not true, but that such skill and attention as he could not easily purchase for himself is at his service is indisputable. Whatever his trouble, if medical science can relieve him it is there at his disposal, and anyone acquainted with the practical working of our great hospitals knows that it would be difficult indeed for any service to the afflicted to be more skilfully, generously or discreetly rendered. And where there is something which is really good, which is doing the work well for which it was intended, it is hard to see why it should be scrapped and destroyed to oblige the doctrinaire who will be satisfied with nothing less than the complete fulfilment of his own idea.

And if this is to be said for the patient, what of the doctor, who is also a person to be considered?

Create a State Medical Service and what have you got? The doctor becomes another servant of the State, which is always the engine driven by the particular body of leaders and rulers who have got the footplate and the switches to themselves for the time being. He is intelligent, trained,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

ambitious, desiring to compete for the prizes of this world with his peers. You transform him into the obedient tool of a host of functionaries, take from him the legitimate hope of the rewards hitherto attached to his profession, assure him of a competency but destroy his hope of affluence, and tell him that he is now the enlisted soldier in a vocational army, must act only from the highest of altruistic motives, and must be at the beck and call of the emissaries of the body politic for £500 a year. Give each man £1000 and you are robbing the public, who could get equally good service for less; give him his £500 and he will be dreaming of Harley Street and the chances he has missed. As to his vocation, there is no reason on earth why the doctor should be motivated by strictly altruistic sentiments. Eager for renown, desirous of cash for himself and family, he will seek to understand his business, will serve well, will proportion his rewards to the finances of his patients, and will usually be generous in dealing with the needy. But he is a man and a citizen, has the right to hold individual opinions about ethics, social custom, religion, and so long as he does not overtly offend the laws, to regulate his life as a freeman. And the patient benefits thereby as does society at large. A State Medical Service is not necessary, it may not even be desirable, and health, like other things in this world, must be worked for and guarded by the citizen, if he is not to be transformed into an adult child.

In order to provide security it is further said that prices must be stabilized lest by the variation, high or low, of prices at home or abroad the selling of goods should be made difficult or impossible. Should this happen, then there would be no effective demand for the goods produced, either because the price did not pay the producer or because it inhibited the prospective buyer, the result of which would be a return of mass unemployment, the thing above all which the political leader is anxious to avoid if he can. No one can

SECURITY

say whether, in a world which has ceased from war, the stabilizing of prices by agreement, either amongst the dealers at home or amongst the respective nations, can be maintained for more than a brief period. In war anyone can govern, is one of the accepted maxims of politics. There is always the national interest as the last resource of debate. But in peace it is different. Then the economic forces of the world begin to assert themselves, the officials discover that the citizen is no longer submissive, is inclined to say and do what he likes and to tell the official class very properly to go hang and then, the interests, appetites and passions of men being released, the politician finds that the economic forces have outrun the constable. This may not happen, but it is a possibility, and the notion that the whole world is going to wait to do business whilst some international committee settles the prices of bacon, and scrap iron, and tomatoes, and ships may prove unworkable. Yet security seems to demand as a preliminary some successful effort at the stabilizing of prices.

There is also the possibility that freedom from want and fear might leave some men without the necessary stimulus to effort. A hard saying! And yet there is a measure of truth in what foremen and gangers, bos'ns and sergeant majors may say. Given the inspiration of some high cause, warlike or not, and out of the common human material you may draw such energy of devotion as you would not believe possible outside of the crudest melodrama. A thousand instances prove it, and Conrad's tales are a long illustration of the potential abnegation and heroic self-sacrifice lying dormant in ordinary men. But even war is not eternal and shipwrecks are not the rule but the exception, and in the common routine of existence, when the drums are silent, the work of the world must be done by men who are not uplifted by these tides of patriotic exultation. And there is and will always be an immense amount of rough, unpleasant work to

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

be done about which no heroics can be sung and to do which men must be urged by some strong motive. Hunger and sex and common greed have their part to play in life and the desire for bread and butter and some jam cannot be ignored.

Is security possible? The question is hurled at the man of dubious mind in a hundred conversations every day. It is a little like those interrogations addressed by earnest souls to the passer-by, or by chuckling journalists to a bemused public: Do you believe? And there are many men, not ill-grounded or ill-intentioned who would reply: Believe what, how much? Similarly when such men are asked if security is possible they may answer: Perhaps it is not impossible. Then why are you not urging it, making it impossible for any Government to refuse to implement these proposals? Is it just greed, inertia or devilish wickedness that prevents you from shouting in the public streets: Ho, all you toiling and suffering creatures, here is security for the taking, grasp it and make yourselves safe for ever? But it is not so easy as that.

For although here also it may be assumed that men are not unconscious of their own interest, it need not be just greed or lethargy or the power of evil that motives their conduct, so uncertain, so hesitant; it may be a prudent dubiety. The rash youth, having sown some oats, falls in love, is eager to marry, not in two years but next week, though he has not a stiver, owes money all round, can't borrow a cent. Shall he do it? Thousands have done it, why not he? The parents say: 'No, too soon, test yourself, save a little, pay off some debts. You might pull it off, have luck, get clear, make yourself and wife secure, and you might not. And to crash, with a wife and children, might be nasty'. And that is the attitude of the man who says security is not impossible but is not something to promise rashly to everybody.

For suppose that things do not settle down, as we hope they will, that America and Britain and China and Russia find

SECURITY

themselves caught up in the backward tides of this considerable flood, that trade languishes in spite of all the fillips and injections given by the Government and that finances get out of hand; then, having given something, you may be obliged to take it away. Is there not the possibility of real trouble there? Men can be bitter when they feel they have been cheated. Hitler is credited with the affirmation that the will of a nation is stronger than economic law. It may be, but one is doubtful, and that is why men may hesitate before they promise security to all. Keep your promises within limits, work at the task with constitutional means, and something may be done. Offer a large dividend and break your word and then you may hear more than you wish of those extra-constitutional means of which men speak. And the price? Social security must mean social control and the one will always balance the other. The nation must choose, but before deciding it should understand what the price is and know that it must be paid.

And is it to be expected that the promise of security in old age, or a minimum of safety in the present will content the men who are returning from the wars? The fighting man will expect, being at home again, to be allowed the privilege of risk and danger in civil life, which he enjoyed, with whatever limitations, before he went abroad. The shopkeeper will wish to return to his own manner of living, the salesman to try his hand once more at making a livelihood by selling goods, and the small merchant, the little manufacturer, the journeyman with ambitions, will demand the right of carving out some sort of career, if it mean no more than that at the end of forty years he may have made and saved as much as will put him beyond the reach of want without the assistance of a Government official to inspect his books and restrain his activities.

The truth is that the leaders in the movement for universal security may be misinterpreting the psychology of the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

average man of these islands. He is, if we are to take the evidence of observers and even of policemen and magistrates, something of a gambler. He always has been, and it is from the temper of adventure which is part of the gambler's equipment that there has come so much that is valuable in the life and work of this people. To think of him as meditating throughout his years of virility upon the question of how he can guard himself from starvation in old age is to misinterpret the characteristics of the race. He will more than ever want freedom of action, the right to carve out some form of life and work for himself which may give him the illusion, if such it be, that he is really an independent person, something more than the obedient echo of the secretary of his Union, or the humble attendant at the labour exchange waiting on the gracious favour of some clerkess to whom he is but a number. And it is to this spirit of adventure, this disposition to live boldly, that the nation must look, if it is not to sink into premature senescence and show itself rather as a home for indigent gentlemen than a race of free men eager to try conclusions with the perils of living.

In fact this guarantee of economic security for everyone prompts the question whether men are not asking from society more than society can give, since, far from being one of the simple and normal conditions of social life it is, where for a short time it prevails, one of the most extraordinary developments of a highly complex social order. The background of it must be immunity from interference by other tribes, guaranteed by military supremacy; an agriculture so highly developed that on occasion food for the whole population can be obtained from the native soil; an industry and commerce maintained at such a high level of productiveness and with such markets for the goods produced that there shall be an annual profit, sufficient for the liquidation of all debts and the distribution of an adequate income to all the members of the society; whilst in addition there must be a

SECURITY

surplus sufficient to assure the non-working citizens their promised income and provision made for those unexpected accidents to the mechanism of industry which the most accurate foresight cannot prevent. Can these things be done, not for a moment of time, but through decades and centuries, so that humanity, or at least the more highly favoured sections of the race, can come to regard them as the normal accompaniments of human life?

At least it must be understood that these benefits are conditional upon the prosperity of the country; that social services may be an admirable thing for the citizens but can only be continued so long as trade and industry will allow of this drain upon the Exchequer, and that there is no certainty that the British people will remain the chief trading power of the world, or that they can be sure of retaining more than a moiety of the wealth drawn from commerce which was theirs during the marvellous period from 1850 to 1910. Much is said about bringing the living standard of Eastern peoples up to the British level, lest they have an unfair advantage in competing for trade. But in the real world, where each member must compete for his share of provender, there is nothing to compel the Eastern to live in the same style as the Northern or Western peoples, and neither Indian nor Jap nor Chinaman will do this for the benefit of Manchester or Lyons. Yet without these things economic security may be endangered.

CHAPTER X

THE MANAGERS

NATURALLY the first thing to understand about trade or business is that men are not engaged in them for the good of their health, but for the purpose of making a living and if possible a competence or more. Morris may have made Kelmscott his hobby, he may have taken it seriously as the beginning of a crusade, but Murray did not publish Byron's poems because he thought they would benefit the morals of English youth, but because he saw therein profit for himself and, incidentally, the possibility of £30,000 being added to the capital of the noble lord. And however lamentable it may be in the eyes of the idealist, Murray is nearer to the heart of the normal man than Morris. In the world of reality wise men leave it to others to back losers and try for the winners. And from the making of pins to the building of ships and aeroplanes, from the cabbages of the market gardener to the vast crops of the Canadian prairies, from the worker's rabbit hutch to the flocks of the Australian plains, the rule is that men embark their money and invest their time in industry or agriculture for the sake of gain. Put your money in one basket, said Carnegie, and never take your eye off that basket.

It follows that the internal working of every industry must be conditioned by this original purpose. The rewards of the industry must be proportioned to what the industry will bear. If the industry is essential to the life of the nation and yet will not pay for the investment of capital or the expenditure of labour, then the nation must accept responsibility for it. If shipbuilding and railways are not moderately remunerative, or if agriculture cannot produce a modest profit, sufficient to induce men to pursue it as an avocation, then these must be taken over by the nation and worked at a loss

THE MANAGERS

for the national good, because they are indispensable to the continued life of the nation. But it must be remembered that all subsidies, grants, endowments allowed for this purpose are so many burdens, extra taxes and costs, added to the national expenses. And if wages in these industries, by pressure of voting power, are raised above the economic level, paid out of the national fund rather than out of the industry, then the bootmaker in Northampton, the lace maker in Nottingham, and the counterpane in the London shop is paying the porter, the riveter and the ploughman so that these men may have the pleasure of following their respective trades.

Quite properly the tendency in recent years has been to force wages to a higher level, and the work of the corporate bodies, trade unions, workers' organizations and the rest, aided by the Government, has brought much more money into the purse of the average householder. An improvement so real and desirable ought not to be despised. There are those who believe that this is but the prelude to something infinitely better, that the forty-five millions of people now living in these islands can continue to increase their earnings, or at least to maintain them at their present level, by sheer force of their expressed will to do so. That much has already been accomplished all can see, but every improvement in wage standards is conditioned, as by its shadow, by the rule that prices shall rise also, with the result that the man of to-day may earn four or five times what his prototype earned fifty years ago and twenty times what was paid for similar work five centuries since, and yet may find himself relatively poor as compared with those who have gambled and won in the lottery of life.

It is the existence of these relative comparisons, the fact that there is still a gulf between the rich and the ordinary workers, that galls the kibe of the revolting mass. Six pounds a week with prices as they were in England five centuries ago

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

would make a man rich to-day, whereas even with wireless and the little car and all the gadgets which come to him from the stored ingenuity of mankind, it leaves him still with the feeling that he has been hardly dealt with, is one of the unlucky dogs of the world. It is again the presence of the permanent factors, in this case the attendance of prices upon wages, which dims the light in the picture. Trade union effort, increased consumption as preached in America, tariffs to keep out competitive goods, all these may be tried, but the fact remains that there is no royal road to plenty for everybody because prices are always and everywhere tied to wages. And because of this it becomes dangerous to preach the doctrine that wages can be raised indefinitely, dangerous because business and industry consists in the manufacture and exchange of goods, and the buyer will, in spite of all persuasion, pay some attention to price, and will declare bluntly that it is not his affair to see that trade union rates are paid, or that all workers in all countries live on the same level; and if he will not buy then all the efforts of the workers' leaders will not avail to create a market, and the man who wants high wages and short hours finds himself with plenty of leisure and no work and no wages at all at the end of the week. It is all very annoying and humiliating, but the result is that the permanent factors cannot for ever be ignored.

It has long been the dream of average mankind to escape from control. Monarch, baron, cotton planter, capitalist employer stand between them and freedom. Remove these and the world is theirs. It does not happen. Instead they pass from one yoke to another, perchance more exigent, galling than ever. For without leaders the mass of men are helpless, and to-day as ever the competent leader must be found. Not necessarily political or even articulate in the verbal sense. Lamartine, Hugo, Rochefort may sink to small proportions when the revolutionary shouting and

THE MANAGERS

hanging are over. Then men feel that they must live, that the means of life are all round them, but the key to this hidden wealth is lost. And it is then that the true masters and leaders are called upon to lead and to rule. They emerge, these gifted or trained ones, from each and every grade and class, the mathematicians, mechanics, chemists, the men who hold the key to production, the Admirable Crichtons who, in every reversion to the primitive, reveal themselves as the men who can handle the tools, produce the goods.

It is the peculiarity of this class of men that they can dictate their own terms as to payment. In a complex society they are ruled by the competitive principle. Because there are many of them some can be dispensed with and the price of their services is ruled by supply and demand. Reduced to its elements society must meet their terms if it would command their services. Of course it may threaten them with death if they are contumacious, but this is to kill the goose, cut off the hand. They did this in Russia after 1917 until they learned better. Unless the whole of their technical system, without which a modern society cannot function, was to rot, or fall into the hands of German specialists, they had to cultivate, preserve, and foster their own masters of technique.

These men are the masters, the managers of industry in all its forms. And the business of the political magician is to persuade them to serve the common purpose of society. Czar Peter, trying to make his Russians into soldiers and sailors, must find and use these men. Lenin and Stalin must do the same. The primary condition, safety for the manager, is understood. Firing squads and tortures will not avail. But that is only the beginning. Terror will not serve. What will? The political artist has always appealed to two major motives, pride and cupidity, the love of distinction or desire for gain. Frequently he will use both. Vanity, honour, deliverance from immersion in the anonymous multitude,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

will move men to prolonged and intense effort. Military triumphs as in Rome, V.C.s, medals and stripes on breast or sleeve, a garter round the knee, are some of the rewards for which men will toil and suffer. But the reward must appeal, it cannot command. Your potential leader, manager, may remain indifferent to jewels, ribbons, and the euphony of names.

What then? Try the lure of gain. There is no need for contemptuous cynicism here. A free man has the right to fix the price of his services. If he wishes to be paid in cash rather than in words that is his affair. Marlborough and Massena were great soldiers. They both loved money and counted their gains. It is not the noblest motive, but with many men it is effective, and the statesman who refused to use this spur to strong minds would be guilty of grave error. Some would agree with Walpole's alleged saying that every man has his price. Splendid examples could be cited to show that the rule is not universal. But in the management of commerce and industry it is the accepted mode of valuation. And it works. Unless there are strong personal reasons to the contrary, men skilled in the management of great commercial undertakings expect to be paid in proportion to the monetary value of their work. These rewards are often financially high. In the world of free industry success brings wealth. True, the State may take the greater part by taxation, but since all alike are subject to this, he is still, by comparison, a rich man. And this power of the monetary reward in persuading men to undertake risks, to accept responsibility, is so great that only blind prejudice would persuade the statesman to dispense with it.

For the manager is a practical man, keenly sensitive to the real in life. He is not of the breed of Shelley or Faraday, geniuses to whom ideas are food and drink. His task is to understand mechanism, to calculate costs, to know markets, to balance risks against possible profits, to be at once the

THE MANAGERS

shrewd calculator and bold gambler, speculating courageously whilst other men seek a limited security and in these ways hourly proving himself equal to his task, its burdens and dangers. Nor can he afford to be ignorant of the art of handling men, directly or through their representatives, knowing when to give way to their demands, when to stand firm against exaggerated claims, to conciliate, persuade and if necessary to command those who work with him that the common interest may be served. Such men have created the commercial prosperity of Britain. Long before Governments took any serious interest in trade and industry they had built up a system which brought to England a wealth, comfort, and a standard of living for the people hitherto unknown in the world. They worked for rewards which they themselves chose, for pride of place, increase of wealth, the common motives of men. It is suggested that we should change the system, destroy the motives, confiscate the rewards, cut up by the roots the tree on which these fruits have flourished. It is an experiment, like another, and the nation may resolve to make it. But he would be a rash man who would guarantee that the new method would succeed as well as the old.

Against this line of thought and action, the disposition to make the pursuit of gain a dominant motive in commerce and industry, many of the best men in the world revolt with disgust. They hate it and despise it and are perfectly sincere in their feelings as they are candid in their speech. And there are moments when every decent man agrees with them. In the same issue of the newspaper they will read a story of a soldier advancing alone with hand grenades to capture a gun emplacement, completing the task and dying across the gun; or of naval ratings with their officer, after being torpedoed, spending ten days on an open raft in mid-ocean, drenched, starved, but enduring, until picked up by a passing steamer; or of any one of the hundred deeds of heroism and self-abnegation which happen every day on the different battle

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

fronts. Then turning the page they read of some profiteer who has been selling lard, timber, fur-coats, whisky or what not at exorbitant prices to customers who know perfectly well that we live in a beleaguered fortress, that unless the rationing rules are observed the poor may know what famine means, and who yet do these things with complete indifference to the consequences affecting the nation, only congratulating themselves with a grin on being smarter than the rest of mankind. Who can wonder that the ordinary citizen at such a juxtaposition of facts damns to the nethermost hell, with Dantean fury, the callous bloodsuckers who would sell to the enemy the land that has been a harbour of refuge to them and their forbears for the sake of monetary gain, and would buy for themselves the loaf that the famine-stricken mother needs for her children? And it is natural that he should ask why there cannot be in the life and activity of the civilian trader the same chivalrous generosity as he finds in the sailor and the soldier, who take wounds and death, or the chance of it, as part of their day's work. The indignation is real and is justified.

And yet is he not confusing things that differ? And are not we all doing the same thing when we so blithely ask from average human nature, in civil life and in peace time (for the citizen of to-day is making that demand upon his fellows for the coming days of peace, as well as for the present days of war), the same kind of motive and the same sort of activity as will be found in the conduct of the professional soldier, sailor or airman? We are forgetting the ancient distinction between the motive of gain and the motive of honour. The fighting man, the warrior, of land, sea or air, is motivated by the principle of honour and is thereby at once placed in a different category from the trader actuated by the desire for gain.

True this does not preclude the influence of other motives of conduct, emulation, ambition, fame, or, in lower moods, the love of loot, the passion for adventure, or the delight in conflict for itself, all of which may operate in the mind of a good

THE MANAGERS

soldier; but the prevailing force in his life will be the rule of honour, the code regulating the society to which he belongs. All soldiers know this, good leaders make it part of their work to indoctrinate the recruit with the idea that he must not let the regiment down, that the Army must not be disgraced in him, that finally he is the custodian of England's fame. By commercial standards he is ill paid; cold, heat, sickness, misery of the trenches, fatigue, danger, discipline, subordination, all these he hates, like other men, but all these he must accept and endure, with no monetary reward at all comparable to what he would look for in civil life, because he is a soldier. He is paid with a currency hardly negotiable, with honour, the sense that he belongs to a select class, the guardians of the people, the home from which he sprang.

Can this be carried over into civil life, the life of trade, with the same intensity and made to rule there? It cannot. Of course the profiteer is condemned at once, he is out of court, a robber of the common kind. There is only one effective remedy for him and his work and that cannot be applied in war time. Open and free competition will destroy him in a month, since with full markets and free consumption his trade has gone. But in war time that remedy cannot be applied. When it can we shall hear little of him and his work.

But even with the honest trader it is difficult if not impossible to apply the principle of honour, such as we find it with the soldier, as a rule of action. And here is the explanation of that strange notion, still to be found in rural places and even in some not rural, that there is a difference of grade and of social value between the military and the commercial caste, the one following a trade, the other a vocation. And though we rightly think much of this is paltry, and to-day there is much of trading amongst the aristocracy, even to the opening of shops and the touting for orders, the ancient difference between the man of the sword and the man of the ledger exists.

Does this mean that there is no such thing as honour amongst

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

trading men? Surely not. For there are multitudes of men engaged in business, selling and buying for their living, who are as sensitive on the point of commercial honour as any beau sabreur on the nicest point of military rectitude. To cry off a bargain, to fail in payment of a debt, to make an unjustified overcharge, of all these things they would be ashamed. But commercial integrity does not usually mean to put one's life in pawn, and the soldier has done this from the moment he is enrolled.

Nor should we complain because we cannot find in the trader from day to day that abnegation of self which marks the soldier at his best. In an ideal world the whole business of mankind might be transacted by word of mouth, 'the word of an Englishman' might still be current coin, but in the real world this will not do. Apart from the fallibility of human memory, the mass of mankind cannot be trusted to carry out a bargain, want more than they are entitled to from each transaction, ask for more profit than the business will bear, break down in their contracts, refuse to work according to the bond, cheat when they can with impunity, and their word is useless unless written and sealed by official persons. And all ideals of the future state of humanity which forget these unpleasant facts, however attractive they may be, are illusory; and the hope of making every shopkeeper into a hero always acting for the public good, even supposing that he knows what the public good may be, must give way to the acknowledgment that men in trade are actuated by the love of gain and that their service will usually be proportioned to their monetary reward.

Much is said about the inhumanity of wealth and there is no lack of ground for complaints on this score. But inhumanity on the part of the rich is most common where the number of rich men is small and the prizes offered relatively few. And this inhuman power of the rich declines with their increase. It may have been true of the British commercialist that he was

THE MANAGERS

hard in dealing with others, just as the zemindar in India or the gombeen man in Ireland is hard, just as the Boston shipping man was hard in the early days of the Americas when dealing with his sailors. The feudal class all over Europe could be hard, French noble, Prussian junker, Russian boyar, since there was little movable wealth about and the Jewish usurer generally had his hand on this and granted the use of it only on harsh terms to the men who borrowed from him. Only when industry on the great scale arrived could this chain of circumstance be broken, the area of distribution broadened.

To-day the diffusion of riches has made such severities as were once all too common almost impossible. There are too many who know the ropes, who are capable of competing for a share of the distributable wealth, for anything like the ancient tyrannies to exist. Kill off the present owners by the hundred, reduce them to beggary and there will still be those left to whom the acquisition of wealth by any means is the most urgent avocation in life, and these will once more be stern in the pursuit of their goal, brutal in the capture of any prey which comes within their range. The best remedy for financial cruelty is the increase of wealth, public and private, to cut off the lone wolf and to increase the number of self-supporting citizens. In America there are still scandals and will be, but there is very little fear. Sometimes the economic machine overruns itself and there is disaster, banks close their doors, factories stop, the machines are silent and there is unemployment on the large scale as in 1929. Who was to blame for this, if anyone, is doubtful, but probably the chief cause was that the politicians and the officials had thought it wise to corner gold, to gather treasure and sit on it with a gun across one's knees. But in normal times, when the economic machine is allowed to move freely, there may be occasional hardship but there is little cruelty and not much fear. And the reason is that there is a vast mass of wealth scattered throughout the American continent in lots small or great, so that each citizen

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

feels that he has opportunities of dealing with recurrent crises by shifting his position, altering his employment, not being bound to one man or confined to any single occupation beyond the day when it may cease to provide him with a decent living.

The truth of this may be recognized at once by one who notes the independence of the average American man. The industrialist may fire a man at a moment's notice, the farmer may tell his helper to lay off and give him his wages. But this does not mean that the workman is suddenly transformed into a hobo, a shelterless tramp, a sponger on society. Usually he can work at a score of different tasks, and feels himself still a free and independent person because he is sure that somewhere in that continent there will be someone who can employ him, to whom his services may be worth a wage and a livelihood. And if the employer can sack his man, the man can with the same freedom leave his employer and knows it. And this liberty of thought and act comes from the variety and vastness of the industrial and commercial wealth of the States, into which almost any sort of human being can fit himself, if he has learned the simple lesson that if a man would eat he must work.

Should the idealist complain, as he often does, that this whole system of working for profit is repugnant to him, that he hates it in its larger as well as its smaller manifestations, its bullying giants and its pettifogging dwarfs, let him remember that since the beginning of civilization there has been a continuous competition between methods of living and that obviously this is the method which has survived. Humanity has had every mode of conducting its economic life open to it, not one of them but has been tried in one or other section of the earth's surface. And it is this method of trading for profit, with all its accompaniments, complicated to-day by the introduction of machinery, but in essence the same as that which actuated the merchant of Damascus or Aleppo four thousand

THE MANAGERS

years ago, which has outfought and outlived them all. And the reason is that it is so congruent to human nature, so flexible and adaptable to all the shades of sentiment and variations of desire, that it has won its rightful place as the dominating method in the management of humanity's secular affairs.

The devotee of democracy must then adapt his thinking to the fact that the majority of men are moved by such motives as that of gain and the love of power, camouflaged in a thousand ways in every social caste; wish to excel, will to command, extension of influence, enlargement of personality or whatever name one may choose, but all budding and branching from the same root. And the task of modern man is to work up this raw material into a form suitable for the democratic community. One of the primary tasks here is to rid the citizen of the notion that democracy means liberation from the burdens of life in society. On the contrary it may intensify them though it may also distribute them better. Already there is some perception of this. Military service has become and will probably remain compulsory in all democratic communities. Taxation is no longer the privilege of the rich but has become the common burden of every citizen, not by the jugglery of priests and nobles but by sheer economic necessity. Overtime and taxation on overtime has already taught many citizens that the State is not the most indulgent of masters.

The manipulators of finance, working for the Government, have reduced by a third if not by half the purchasing value of the pound. The limitation of free spending is proceeding apace and the circle of purchasing control open to the consumer is being steadily reduced. Much which the intelligent observer regards as useless luxury is being curtailed, and the advertisers of silks and jewels, pills and potions, drams and dope of every kind are hard put to it to retain their footing in this ever-narrowing area. The passion for improving other people has again taken hold of the public mind, and the process of standardizing all things, including human nature, is in

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

full swing. Whether the dustman, the bagman or the gentleman is to be the model for all is not yet clear, but the button moulders are at work, and are bent on bringing every stratum of society within the ambit of their art. And since the indirect and collateral effects of these manipulations of human material are greater than their direct results, it is probable that the personal management of one's own life and interests will be steadily diminished.

In fact we are coming to see that majority rule is likely to be more arbitrary than the competing systems and the minority, whether of one or a fourth of the population, must accept the decree of the ballot box, the judgment of its elected representatives, as the utterance of an infallibility which cannot err. Without assenting to the dogma that majorities are always wrong, one may remember John Hampden and John Brown, Luther and Huss, who were of the minority and yet seem to have had the right on their side. And it may be that in the eternal war of the One against the Many the democratic despotisms will require their martyrs, that their blood may be the seed of that ecclesia whose watchword is freedom.

CHAPTER XI

MONOPOLY

WHEN a society is young the surplus energy of its manhood will be directed towards adventure, or in industry towards the production of goods. When it is old the opportunities for exploration and adventure may be fewer, production may be already established and working along well-known lines. Then there is a disposition to concentrate on the matter of distribution. A keen sense of the inequities existing in all societies will be developed and there will be complaints about the injustices from which the less fortunate or less enterprising are suffering. This is particularly noticeable in societies touched with the democratic spirit, since that spirit easily lends itself to a sympathy with the equalitarian idea, and those who are dissatisfied find the disparities in position and possessions all the more unwelcome since they seem to conflict with the first principles of the social order. Here may be found the genesis of some of the internal dangers threatening democracy. One of these dangers may be monopoly.

The politicians, determined that there shall be no unemployment in the political world, have a programme of 'reforms' dealing particularly with monopolies. These are divided into natural and artificial: the former, like transport, coal, gas, light and so on; and the latter, combines and cartels in manufacturing and merchanting. Some of these natural monopolies are described as 'ripe and over-ripe for public ownership'. This is to introduce a conception and terminology into politics which will require some scrutiny. For the conception is of growth taken from the field or garden and implies a process of development and culmination. It suggests more than this, for what can grow ripe can also go rotten. The believers in free

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

activity in industry have always known this, have had to be on the watch for the signs of incipient decay. But the believers in public ownership have no such fear. They are certain that once the tree is transferred to the public garden, labelled by the new title of municipal or national, it will continue to grow for ever without indication of corruption or even of age. They are mistaken.

In France it is difficult to obtain a cigarette which an Englishman can smoke with pleasure, or tobacco of reasonably good quality. Tobacco is a State monopoly. The public services in Italy under the Socialist regime had become a byword in Europe. They were loaded to the gunwale with dead wood. Mussolini founded much of his popularity on his success in clearing the public services of this encumbrance. The trains ran to time, the officials discovered that they were expected to work and the swarms of public persons who lived upon the national purse were sent adrift. But it was necessary to be a Dictator to do this. The lethargy which falls like a blight on State services, guarded from the stress of competition, is always threatening its possible victim. If in Britain there is less of this than in some countries, it is because the public services are under criticism from a vigilant public, still favourable to private enterprise and resentful of departmental arrogance. Make a third of the population into Government employees and the rot of dilatory ineffectiveness would spread like a gangrene.

Even in dealing with necessities such as water, private enterprise has rendered great services to mankind. Yet in meeting the needs of large agglomerations of people in limited areas the advantages of unified control are obvious and public ownership and responsibility become almost automatic. There are other natural monopolies which may be argued about and the work already done in these by private enterprise is highly valuable. Public ownership might result in failure rather than success. The service rendered by the Electric

MONOPOLY

Supply Companies is good. Much remains to be done and the Companies can do it if they are left free to extend their boundaries and to invest their capital without too much interference from the official caste. Prejudice alone can blind one to the service rendered by these examples of what the profit motive, blent with a decent sense of responsibility to the public, can accomplish.

There is a good deal of harsh speech in these days about the iniquity of the natural monopolists. One might suppose that we were dealing with monstrous examples of financial criminality modelled on the worst days of the East India Company or the Jamaican plantations. What has happened is that certain persons have realized the possible value of new discoveries and inventions in science; have thought of these in their practical application; have seen some benefit to humanity and a reasonable hope of profit for themselves and have invested their money in corporations and companies which were to engage in the further development of these discoveries and inventions. Many of the schemes turned out mere moonshine; the men who put up the cash lost their capital, frequently more than they could afford and found themselves poor instead of rich. Other speculations were successful, the inventions proved workable, profitable, and money was made by those who were lucky enough to have chosen the right scheme for investment. But the skeletons of the dead along this road are innumerable; most adventures of this sort fail and the rewards of the bold fellows are and ought to be proportional to the risks they run. Coal, clay, cement, stone, water, gold, diamonds, rubies, all these are sought for through holes dug in the ground, and the solid fortunes that have dribbled down these holes would run into many millions. If these men had not risked their cash, either the society, the nation, must have done this, with consequent loss to the society in the greater number of instances, or the adventure would never have been made and light, coal, transport, and the rest

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

of the criminal fraternity upon which the socialist glares would have been non-existent.

Concerning transport it may fairly be said that had it been left to Government initiative and control the railways would never have been as efficient and as cheap as they now are, and the third class from London to Glasgow, the best travelling in the world at three halfpence a mile, would have been something still to be desired. The road transport system would have been in its early infancy, struggling with the mass of formulas and restrictions with which all Government business is deluged. Fortunately the disposition to make money where they could stirred the enterprising spirits of the time. They took up the challenge of the day and out of free competition created a system of road transport which before the war was already a serious rival to the railways. The devotee of public ownership now desires to take over this and the railways, to pool them all, and to create one of those large and often unwieldy corporations, guided avowedly by the spirit of service, but really motivated by the will to escape from the drive and urge of free competition in which the rewards go to him who best meets the needs of the travelling public.

As to light, heat and the rest, the companies engaged in this business do their work well. They provide the product in which they deal at a reasonable rate, their employees are well treated, the public is satisfied, and the investors who provided the capital in what was originally a highly speculative venture, are obtaining a modest return for their money. Criminals as they are, they dare to believe that this reward has been rightfully earned by the risks that were run. They fail to appreciate the manner in which the Friends of the People represent them as bloodsucking vampires, but this is to be expected, since they are merely decent folk who have speculated with much courage and some small luck. There is no reason why these companies should not continue their good work, save the fanatic's devotion to the idea of public ownership, his desire to

MONOPOLY

attain power by stripping others of their possessions under the aegis of the laws, and his wish to round off a system by bringing everything within the ambit of communal control.

Inevitably these reformers create a sterner monopoly in what they call the public interest. The municipalities of the country are at least unanimous in this, that when they have once secured control of one of these natural monopolies, they immediately ban, under extreme penalties, any competitor. The trams are run, the buses travel the roads, gas and light are laid on, and woe to the private trader who dares to trespass upon this sacred domain. Not even when the public interest obviously requires some relaxation of the rules will they allow a vestige of their exclusive prerogative to be taken from them. Having chloroformed their competitors, they are allowed to boast of their success and, exulting in their supremacy, allow no rival near the throne.

There is another reason why this disposition should be scanned with jealous eyes. For when transport, light and heat, etc., are all incorporated in one large society, made public property, with the trade unions connected with each highly organized, working under a powerful head committee, it will not be long before the possession of power by these men will tempt them to exercise it. Instead of the Commons, the centre of authority will then be the Chamber where this committee meets. Should there be any friction between the workers and their employers, it will be a simple matter to issue the necessary directions, the army of workers being already organized for the purpose, and the country may find itself confronted with a crisis of the first order. The employees of all the public works throughout the country may be out on strike, the business of the nation held up, because an apprentice has been rebuked for impertinence or a workman has downed tools in a fit of ill-temper. Then the nation must wait for its light and heat and transport, until the incorporated society of all workers consents to resume its employment.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

This is no fantastic notion. On the contrary it is the considered plan of those who desire to see all the working wealth of the kingdom seized for public ownership. Let it be recalled that there are those who believe that, about the old foundations of society there is now no substantial agreement, and that these potential leaders mean to overturn the present structure that they may put another, quite different, in its place. The reluctance to say Amen to the laudations of public ownership, the stubborn defence of private enterprise as the instrument by which the much greater portion of the work of the kingdom should be carried on, does not spring entirely from ignorance or avarice, it may have its roots in a keen recollection of ancient tyrannies and a clear perception of the danger of new despotisms.

The artificial monopolies are formed by trusts, combines, cartels, with the purpose of stifling competition. They may be based upon complete control of some particular article of commerce; or competitors may be bought out as they appear, or crushed by underselling in an open market; or they may have secured exclusive privileges either in possession of land or in the control of commodities. There is no offence in any of these things if, on balance, the results are beneficial to the general public, the ultimate consumer of the goods produced. The offence consists in raising prices, through combination with others, beyond a reasonable level against the consuming public. Of course such agreements always have been made, and it may safely be said always will be. Half a dozen buyers at a displeshing sale can hold the ring against the outsider, and the most honest auctioneer cannot prevent it. Every sale of old books, old pictures, old furniture, gives examples of this pooling of skill and knowledge for mutual defence against the amateur and for the exploitation of massed ignorance. It was an old tale when Esau sold his birthright.

What is resented is that the monopolist should entrench himself in an apparently impregnable position and then pro-

MONOPOLY

ceed to exact an extravagant toll upon all who need the goods he has cornered. Common sense suggests that the man who has some merchantable commodity, special knowledge, rare gift, technical equipment, desirable property, is not going to hand it over to the first comer without some return. And if many people desire it, the return in each case should not be exorbitant, since he gains in multitude what he loses in bulk in each contribution. He may be a brigand, but if the ransom is small and the safety promised genuine, there will be grumbling but little resentment. The question then is, does the monopolist supply the goods cheaply and well? Are the goods satisfactory in quality, does he organize his distribution intelligently and reasonably? Is he sensitive to the public demand, adapting himself and his machinery to it, taking the risks of a changing market, in goods and commodities about which there can be little assurance of continuity, either from the vagaries of fashion, changes of taste, or the pressure of invention? Then he may be in his own way something of a benefactor, at least he is not a public enemy. In Tunisia there are phosphates in vast quantities. The working of the stuff is not easy, the conditions are unpleasant, but the phosphates are of value as a fertilizing agent. The monopolists who work the quarries or pits are not philanthropists, but they have rendered a useful service to the world's agriculture at a time when it was badly needed. They need not be ashamed.

When the monopolist is trying to rob the public it is time to put a rival on his track. And there is no better method of bringing him down than by strengthening the little man. For he has small expenses, he is dependent only on his own resources, does not mind working long hours, is not tied down by many regulations. Refrain from annoying him with rules, leave him free to act, and he will often prick the bubble of the big firm, begin a new and rival industry and thus keep the monopolist in his place. Businesses of large dimensions are often started in a very small way. A woman may have a good

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

recipe for marmalade, makes it for herself and friends, sends her son out to sell it from door to door; or it may be a new method of preserving fruit or vegetables, operated in the kitchen of a small house, with a front window which can be used as a means of displaying the goods; and you have the genesis of a new enterprise, developing in the course of one or two generations into a big concern.

Whenever the Trust or Combine is acting prejudicially to the common interest by maintaining prices at an uneconomic level, the Government should act in defence of the interests of the consumer. And competition is the only successful way of dealing with monopolies. For it is a mistake to suppose that the big Trusts find their path easy merely because they are big. The big horned and armour-plated beasts of the primal days went down before the smaller more agile creatures of the time, just as the giant battleship may be sunk by a successful stroke from the bomber. Pearl Harbour has biological significance as well as military. And the number of mergers which have proved unworkable or unprofitable—'Dyers' and 'Cotton' afford examples—show that the rule holds good now, as in the times when the little ships of England broke the Spanish galleons, that size is not sufficient to ensure victory in commerce or in war.

In fine the duty of any Government is to guarantee a free market with healthy competition. It is not the duty of the Government to break a Combine merely to provide Labour with an opportunity of taking over the control and management of an industry, for the benefit of the workers in that industry. Civilized men must choose between monopoly and competition and if they say that competition is often hard in its effects upon the competitor, which is true, they must remember that monopoly can be and usually is harder still upon the consumer, when it is left free to work its will. But where competition is kept as a resource, an agent for restraining the monopolist, so that he is bound to behave himself or

MONOPOLY

take the consequences, it will be found that Trusts and Combinations, by reducing costs of production and distribution, on balance, do more good than harm.

Again if one is prepared to follow the argument through and allow each system to develop itself to the full, then public ownership, complete throughout a nation or the world, defeats its own ends, since it leaves all things in possession of the public, with nothing retained by the individual citizen, or to be hoped for by any endeavours of his own, and that is the stultification of the system. On the other hand private ownership may be left to spread itself throughout a whole society, or conceivably throughout the world. Since it is correlated with enterprise and incessant competition, it can do everything that is needed in any kind of society. It can keep the world busily and profitably employed, without incurring the risk of strangulation in the network of its own regulations, ossifying through petrification of its own structure, or dying of apoplexy through having too much blood in the system. The competitive impulse will keep it healthy, will enforce the removal and rejection of worn-out tissue, and the absorption of fresh vigour from the stream of new life which is always appearing in the world.

These things may well be borne in mind when it is assumed that the only function of private enterprise is to take all the risks, grow the tree, bring it to fruition, then leave the Public Ownership devotees to take all the profits and prestige. Once make this the rule for industry, agriculture and commerce, and the new adventures in applied science will be left severely alone. Men will hoard what money they have or live in idleness at the public expense, leaving to the omnivorous State the risks, which are many, the profits which are often exiguous and always uncertain, of all the novel schemes for the advancement of mankind with which the heads of research students and mechanicians are brimming.

It is doubtful then whether we ought to accept as a necessary

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

evolution the passage of industries and trades from private enterprise into public ownership. It is well to remember that not all publicly owned undertakings are successful; that most of them depend for their success on monopolistic privileges, could not keep going if they had not first destroyed their enemies and then made peace. The losses not infrequently made by public ownership are met out of the taxpayer's pocket, and the citizen is mulcted twice. For those who insist on the wickedness of profits in private enterprise learn, in their dealings with public concerns, that unless you make profits you are bound to make losses and that the one is much easier than the other. If the public resolves to municipalize or nationalize everything it will have to realize that the losses must be met and that they may be heavy. And with the losses on public ownership and the limitation of private enterprise, there is some likelihood that the new Britain may be better acquainted with bankruptcy than the old.

CHAPTER XII

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

ONE of the peculiarities of British democracy is the existence of the monarchy. To the speculative student this seems an anomaly. Certain of the more adventurous, literary and political, have announced this as their opinion, and occasionally one may meet a modern Brutus for whom the very word republic is sacred and every other form an anachronism. But he is a rare bird, and silent withal, feeling himself a stranger and alien amongst those indigenous to the soil. For however incongruous to the logician, maker of ideal systems, it may seem, the truth is that the monarchy, the Crown and what it connotes, is the most democratic, in the sense of being the most deeply rooted in popular feeling, of all British institutions. The long-drawn debate between Crown and Commons has been settled by a happy understanding between the parties concerned. A lengthy series of precedents for conciliatory working has been established, and on this point the unwritten laws of the Constitution work as smoothly as could be desired. And the most impassioned equalitarian, if his eyes are open, must see that the British people intend that the Crown shall remain as the keystone of the social structure, and desire, not only that its wearer should perform faithfully the functions of his office, but should find himself happy in his task. In fine, the monarchy is not simply a political convenience, valuable because of its utility, but something rooted in the deepest affections of the people, the perpetual symbol of a unity underlying all differences.

Beyond doubt the country has been fortunate, during a century, in the persons who have filled this office. The great little woman whose name fills the nineteenth century, for British folk, with lustre, and those who succeeded her, have

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

done their work well. One awkward situation arose, but good sense and courage found a way out, and the bonds between the monarchy and the people were strengthened by an experience which had in it all the elements of dynastic trouble. Of the reigning monarch and his queen it would be an impertinence to speak, beyond saying that he who wishes to estimate their position and influence aright has only to go amongst the people to see and hear for himself. But there are those who would say that the prosperity of the monarchy depends entirely on these personal qualities. And that is an error, great as must be the contribution thus made to the stability of a reigning house. For it is to monarchy as an institution that the British people are attached, the top stone of the building, the source of honour, the centre and focal point of a system which has grown with their growth. An empire welded by the Crown, a kingdom whose lordship is vested in the throne, a democracy in which the king as first citizen is united with his people, this is Britain as she now is, a political figure unique, in her combination of apparent contradictions, amongst the nations of to-day and of many yesterdays.

The virtue of democracy is that in times of crisis it allows the gifted man to come to the front. And the problem of Government is always that of finding the competent man for the post. That fluidity of democracy, that variation of the public temper which seems to make of the politician an embarrassed phantom flitting across the stage, gives opportunity to the able man to show his mettle. Blocked in his path by powerful caste prejudices, he may be no more fortunate than Turgot or Necker, but with a self-conscious democracy to support him he may break through these threatening lines, if he is strong.

In this manner Athens found its leader in Pericles, plainly, from the books, a fighting politician of the first order. America in her greatest trial found the man to speak for her

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

in Lincoln, once a country-lout splitting rails for a living, now becoming one of the world's legendary figures. It is a rough, harsh method of testing men, this of public life in times of national crisis, and the graces of the dancing master are of little avail then. But it is the opportunity for the bold spirit and the strong head. For when the committees cease from wrangling, disputation having reached the bounds of its futility, the nation turns to seek the man who knows his mind, and gives him the sceptre and the sword until the crisis is past.

It is one of the ironies of politics that the leader thus sought and found should be of aristocratic origin. And yet it often happens, especially in Britain. The Jack Cades and Wat Tylers have their place in history, but the Hampdens, Falklands and Cromwells are more often found there. Can it be that, though the British people profess themselves democratic, the leaven of aristocracy still works amongst them? In theory the one excludes, negates the other, in practice they often work side by side. Perhaps the key to this paradox of fact is the truth that however one twists and varies the constituent elements of society there is always an aristocracy. Even America has not escaped it, and the New York Four Hundred may be more exclusive than those whose names fill Debrett. Washington was an English gentleman before he was an American patriot. The Adams, Roosevelts, Morgans and the rest may be good mixers, but they do not open their front door to every garage mechanic who may claim an entrance. And in all the social and political upheavals of Britain the 'gentlemen of England' have played a part, often on the side of those in revolt. And not only in Britain. Landor worked for the rebels in Spain, Byron fought for Greece, Wilfrid Blunt sought to liberate Egypt. And they did not think of themselves as traitors to their order. Can this breed of men live and work, true to themselves, in the democratic world?

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

That the type has qualities, peculiarities of its own is manifest. Its members have a code, varying from land to land, from age to age, but rigid enough at the time and place. Some things are permitted, ordered, enforced, others are not done. He may leave unpaid the tradesman's bills, but a gambling debt must be met or he loses caste. Bourgeois virtue is no more sacred in his eyes than to the proletarian intellectual. Not the amours of Mirabeau and Byron vex the aristocratic public, the least squeamish of all, but the bad habit of prating about them. You may kiss but you must not tell.

Money he needs and knows it, yet he must appear unaware of its importance, or develop an eccentricity, a monomania on the subject, then all is forgiven him. Usually his life is that of the open air man, hunter, sportsman, delighting in displays of physical energy (like Richard Burton, a dark horse in that stable), or a dilettante after the manner of Horace Walpole; conforming to the chief exigencies of his class, but otherwise independent, bold in speech and act. When the foundations of this splendour are undermined, when the wealth departs, he slips from his place in the pageant and a successor fills the gap, for the show must go on.

What then are the qualities of the aristocrat which mark him as of a chosen caste? Wolseley said to the anxious mother: 'The first duty of a soldier is to try to get killed.' Wilful exaggeration of course, but the harsh truth could hardly be more plainly stated. And the stamp of the aristocrat is that, a lover of life, he is willing to die. Tourney, joust, fencing school, the hounds, steeplechasing, after big game, mountaineering, exploring, seafaring, soldiering, wherever there is danger, with every weapon of offence and defence, here is where the aristocrat seeks and finds his chosen task, the final reason for his existence. He has been and must always be first of all the fighting man, the master of life because he is always willing to throw it away. A society over-intellectualized may deride this as romantic

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

nonsense. A feminized society may hate it and despise it as the rule of the brute. But the aristocracy which has become urbane, witty, sceptical, literary, or worst of all, merely financial; which supposes that epigrams, dividends and the minuet or waltz are its only concern, is already gangrened. Yet the aristocrat must not forget the grace of style and the rules for this must be known. Cricket ball or polo club, five-barred gate or rifle shot, he must know how to handle all the tools according to form. And in the boudoir, or the senate, or the library, he will be not the worse but the better actor, worker, because the accomplishments and graces needed there are the superstructure built upon a base of physical force.

In the democratic world of the future it would seem that there can be no place for the aristocrat. Here the wish may be father to the thought, but the decision on that point will depend on whether the aristocrat proves himself merely a parasite and a burden, or possessed of social value. Will he help the society to survive in the ceaseless competition with other societies? It is at least possible that he may do this. He may do it by giving a certain dignity and beauty, a style, to the business of living. They who suppose the world of the immediate future as concerned only with the proletarian or bourgeois standards of living, with work and food, wages and the social virtues, have left out of their calculations the impulses, whims and vagaries of women. They forget Cleopatra's nose, Ninon's charm, and a whole side of human life which in the long run refuses to be ignored. And the women will certainly rebel against a form of society which makes life drab and dull, reacting to the social virtues much as the new generation reacted to the despised Victorian proprieties. They will demand grace and splendour in life as well as the solid comforts of the kitchen, and that regime will be short which tells them that these are unattainable. And then Mill's pregnant judgment must be remembered, that democracy

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

tends to collective mediocrity. The acceptance of that as a permanent condition for any human society would be dangerous to the society itself, and counter to the principle on which the nature of things seems to work. For the tendency of the mediocre in all things is to stagnation, and then to degeneracy. Commerce, art, science, history, offer plenty of illustrations. It is by the wants, desires, ambitions, of men, an insatiable hunger, an unconquerable restlessness, that humanity is driven on towards something different, perhaps better, than it possesses or knows. And the aristocrat of birth or of nature embodies the idea of some excellence, not yet attained, by which the lethargy of the multitude may be shaken.

Again, to those who say that democracy is a faith, that the democrat must believe in human nature, the aristocrat offers a challenge. For he believes in selection. He would choose from the heap of junk that which he thinks worth keeping. He may not subscribe to the doctrine of race, for the conditions of human breeding on the grand scale are too complex to admit of these sharp distinctions between groups, but he knows that in dogs and horses blood will tell and he suspects that in men also it has its influence. Or if it be said that aristocracies are artificial, democracy the natural social form, experience seems to contradict this. Savagery may be content with some form of communism, but the higher social forms seem to depend on property and a complex social structure. And the boldest equalitarian would hesitate to surrender all that society has produced to return to primitive conditions. The Concord group sought some kind of return to Nature, but they kept within hail of Boston.

Aristocracies begin with the division of the group into protector and protected. The stronger or bolder characters organize the stable elements in the group, by prowess or skill, into a resisting and controlling body, of which they are the head. Under the Capets, the Hapsburgs, the Plantagenets,

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

or the Romanoffs the mode is much the same. From such a stem come the families which for generations provide statesmen and soldiers for the State. There is no guarantee that the original qualities will be inherited. If they fail the family dies out. Nature extinguishes her weaklings and failures in society as in the ocean and wilderness. But the strong features of a family, like the Hapsburg jaw, may persist, and the Cecils, Russells, Churchills suggest that there may be something in the Newmarket gospel of breeding.

Aristocracies are to-day in bad odour. The world seems to have resolved that it does not want them. There is not a country in the world where as a class they can feel that they are respected, desired, loved or feared. Here and there the old retainer spirit, fidelity to the House, devotion to the manorial Lord may hide, but it is like a shrinking violet, with few companions. From every quarter the wind blows against them and they seem to have withered under the blast. The very idea of a ruling class, a caste devoted from birth to the task of controlling and directing affairs, is anathema to the democratic temper, provokes irritation, impatient words. 'Thank God', says the famous surgeon apropos of nothing in particular, 'there will soon be no more Dukes.' Finally, thinks the Professor of Mathematics, the human race is growing up and brains will count for more than coronets. Now, says the merchant, a man may push ahead, with none of these gilded popinjays blocking the way to the top. And one may well imagine that the sons of the nobility, all the world over, must feel that they have outstayed their welcome, are unwanted guests and had better go before they are ejected in ignominious fashion.

And yet that may be a harsh and hasty judgment. For it seems that when you have broken up the classes, obliterated the divisions, trampled on the white cockades, destroyed the whole heraldic Zoo by which men have been tricked into loyalty, something remains. Whilst it was never true that

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

some are born with saddles on their backs and others with spurs in their heels, there are differences in men which, worked out by the logic of circumstance, produce a skeleton framework of society. Within this the unit is allotted his part in the social scheme, not by decree but by the gravitation of talent to its proper field, and the classes are born again. And if this is true it is likely that after all the social changes there will be, in every durable social structure, varieties of function which tend to create distinctions of grade and station. That being so, then with the decay of the old aristocracies there must be new ones engendered, trained in such a manner that they may serve the interests of the community and help to retain within the democracies the virtues that belong to the best people, the chosen and dedicated caste. This must be done for the sake of the democracies themselves, for unless they can produce this finer type of character, hard, strong, self-controlled, asking little from others and giving much, the democracies may lose the richer and more gracious forms of life.

Let it be admitted at once that much of this ill repute is deserved. The aristocracies of Europe fell into disgrace and met with ill fortune because they had ceased to play the part and do the work entrusted to them. If the French noblesse met death with dignity, that did not exonerate them from merited blame for having acted like lunatics in the heyday of prosperity, or excuse the stupidity of the monarch who prepared them for their doom. Their work was in the country, watching their lands, caring for their tenants, superintending the tillage of France and guarding the interests of a bold and hardy peasantry, spreading the light of intelligence throughout the whole country and counteracting the vicious greed of Paris and the Court which would take all and give nothing. If they suffered a hard fate, they had brought their pains and penalties upon themselves. They were not criminals, parricides, destroying their motherland, they were fools,

and as is the way with fools the nature of things turned against them and slew them for their folly.

Nor can anything better be said of the aristocracy of Poland, with its preposterous *Liberum Veto*, by which a single dissentient voice could block all legislation; with their insane pride, which would never allow to any monarch a vestige of real power, and their internecine jealousies, which hindered unity for anything but the defence of their own privileges. And Russia saw the same drama played on a vaster scale, and with even greater ferocity, as had been seen in France. There too the privileged caste did not know when to yield, how to rule with the iron hand in the silken glove, to meet the insurgent democracy half way and to incorporate into itself, as part of the governing caste, the new-born genius of a people in revolt. And because of these things there was the tragic removal of the Romanoffs and the nobility which supported them to make way for the Lenins and Trotskys and what they brought with them.

These and others, for the scourge has caught all the European lands, present a melancholy picture for those who believe that the presence of an aristocratic element is essential to the proper working of a democracy, whether the upper class be founded upon birth and adorned with titles or is merely the concentrated essence of the process of natural selection operating upon the competing forces in the industrial and professional arena. And yet it is plain that these favoured classes failed, not through inherent and unpreventable weakness, but from forgetfulness of the primary obligations which rest upon all those called to high positions and great responsibilities. And the new aristocracies, if such there are to be, may learn from their errors and thus guard against their defeat.

The British people, frequently critical, have always had a certain affection for this superior class. And they misinterpret the temper of the race who can admire the warrior caste.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

of India, the chivalry of Spain, or the Samurai of Japan, but have only contempt for the gentlemen of England. There is more in the British nobility than is suggested by the fatuous verse of Lord John Manners. Serving their own interests, neither heroes nor saints in the mass, they have maintained a certain standard of conduct, not ideal but better than that of the crowd, and have created a class skilled in the management of men.

It is not the least of their services that they have saved us from the despotism of the intellectual. The tyranny of the professor can be more searching and irritating than that of the squire or the baronet. When the differences of birth are ignored there is usually a resurrection of those differences in mental endowment which are a radical fact in human nature, and the assertion of these superiorities can be more brutal, in the creation of divisions between men, than the accident of birth or the commands of social etiquette. It is an Oxford professor who has told us, speaking of the distinction between the intellectual and the crowd, that 'I am deliberately and deeply arrogant about all that, as against the contemptible apology of intellectuals for being intellectuals — the attempt to adapt themselves and their behaviour to standards which are not worth a moment's consideration'. Here indeed is the pride of the aristocrat, honestly held and boldly expressed, as aggressive in spirit as that which led the French Duchess to smack the face of the woman who claimed precedence of her at Versailles. But our aristocrat is usually quite aware that between himself and the mass of men there is no radical difference but the chance of birth, with the result that he is freed from the temptation to treat the rest of mankind as plasticine.

Yet it is true that the Colonial visitor may find in the division of classes, the respect for titles and the claims to precedence something repugnant to his appreciation of common human values. Indeed he has frankly said this.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

But then he forgets that this is an old civilization, whilst he comes from a new country, only partially populated, and with a history still to be made. Even if it were possible it would be a mistake to remould Britain after Colonial patterns. In the absolute sense Britain is not a democracy but a mixed society tending towards the democratic ideal. And her development is necessarily conditioned by her history as well as by her present inclinations and opportunities. Whoso forgets this reasons in vain, since his premisses do not agree with the facts.

Another point which might secure a mark for the aristocrat. We used to hear a good deal about the virtues of the simple life. To eat and drink the minimum for bodily sustenance, to wear sandals, to be dowdy for conscience sake, threatened to become fashionable. Tolstoy's amateur cobbling, Carpenter's market gardening, had created a cult of the plain and ugly. The new rich were becoming vulgar and some of the finer spirits fell to cursing civilization. The shadow of Rousseau had fallen on them. There might have been another flight to the desert, a Thebaid of the twentieth century. It was a real danger, for the lovers of holy simplicity forget how quickly human life can be reduced to its ugly primitive elements of digestion and copulation. Luxury can be perilous to society, and the hours of a king's seraglio, like those of Charles II and Louis XV, may rock the foundations of a kingdom by their extravagance. But they are less dangerous to the commonwealth than the fervid ascetics who would make human life once more poor, brutish and ugly. From this danger the aristocrat saves us, hiding the ignominy of birth and the communism of death under a golden cloud of forms, decorations and conventions, making out of its essential vulgarity a thing of beauty. We may welcome the easier manners, the bolder language of democracy whilst retaining respect for the proud attitude of those accustomed from childhood to breathe the air of the heights.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

It is the function of this upper class to balance the authority of the Central Government. Such a class constitutes a body of opinion, prejudiced it may be, but not ill informed, which in the general esteem may weigh heavily against a centralizing authority which seeks to rule all things by a common measure. It will have the power of ridicule, for its members know something of what is happening at the centre and are well aware that even the figures on the front of the stage and the clerks in the offices are human beings, liable to err, hating to look absurd, fearing to appear pretentious and dreading the imputation of being guilty of bad form. Such a class may be the most efficient protector of popular rights, since, being jealous of any infringement of its own privileges it is swift to resent any encroachment on the interests and rights of others, such encroachment being but the prelude to a further advance into the private domain of the upper class. Lord Bledisloe recently rendered a public service by demanding the reasons for invasion of a Lord Lieutenant's house by one of the officials of the Ministry of Food and protesting against it as an attack upon the civic rights of Englishmen. The incident may suggest that an individual was regarded as immune because he was Lord Lieutenant, but the point made was that this person possessed the common rights of the citizen, one of which is that no Government official shall enter his house, without good and grievous cause, against the wishes of the tenant, and the aristocrat, in defending his own order, was really guarding the privileges of each of his countrymen.

Beyond doubt the existence of such a class breaks down the merely provincial habit of mind, by distributing through the country men who have, like Ulysses, seen many men and cities. If they have the sense to avoid the error of the French noblesse, refuse to be merely attendants of a Court, or leaders of a fashionable set at Le Touquet or Nice, but cultivate the countryside, master agriculture, and make themselves the

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

guardians and leaders of a rural society, they are performing duties as important as any that can fall to a self-respecting aristocracy in times of peace.

Nor is it disputable that class differences provide opportunities for a greater variety of talent than the strictly equalitarian system. Whether the ability makes the class or the class opens up roads for the ability may be debated, but it is certain that men of exceptional gifts will not be circumscribed in their activities by any fixed routine, or abstract idea. They will seek to drive a road through the accepted and the customary, find an outlet for their energies, or will instead turn bitter and revolt against a control which galls them.

Certainly it is possible that the British aristocracy has reached the end of its term, that, like the Byzantine or the Russian, the French or the Polish, it has outlived its usefulness. Yet threatened men live long and the notion of a superior class, peculiarly qualified for the task of government, will not easily die. And even where the exclusive circle is invaded by those formerly beyond the pale, the aristocratic principle may live. For is not every democracy an aristocracy of orators? When power is dependent upon votes he who can win votes becomes the leader and the privileges and emoluments of leadership fall naturally to him. The art of speech may be of more service to a man to-day than landed property or movable wealth. And those arts of persuasion, exercised in public assemblies or in private conference, by a Brougham or a Gladstone in the one case, by a Richelieu or Bismarck in the other, may be as effective in the acquisition of power, wealth and station, as the control of a business or the captaincy of legions. Thus as the old aristocracies fail, a new aristocratic order is being created.

Nor should it be forgotten that in this struggle for place and rule, even in a democratic society, the man of lineage, name and birth, is not without certain advantages. He is by nature less of a doctrinaire than the professed intellectual,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

often his rival nowadays for public favour, and knows from birth more about the real world of men in various classes than the ardent democrat who has graduated from the workshop. Nor is he likely to be bound by those cast-iron moralities which, however valuable, are so often a nuisance and a peril to the statesman dealing with large and complex problems. Mazzini, in spite of the dagger whose use he would not condemn, was the political priest; Cavour was the statesman, and it was the statesman who united Italy. The world is not a scruple shop, said Carlyle; and Cornwall Lewis could speak of Government as a rough business in which they who practise it cannot always adhere to the morals of the classroom. These are the issues and the times by which the statesman is tried, and the aristocrat is helped by his birth, culture, social discipline, to know when to stand firm and when to yield.

Assuredly this does not mean that the man of good birth will always win in this kind of conflict. The son of a miner may be a man of rare gifts, a genius, and the descendant of twenty Earls may be a born fool, in which case nothing can save him from treading the path which lights fools to their predestined doom. But when we speak of the decay of the aristocratic idea, assume that democracy is now and will increasingly be all devouring, let us not fail to note that under new forms the old faces reappear, friends and enemies alike, and that the aristocrat may be one of the permanent human forms.

Every virtue has its corresponding vice and to all things there are two sides. Under the shadow of an aristocracy there may flourish all the unpleasant characteristics of the snob. The Court would be tolerable if it were not for the courtiers, and their retinue of toadies and flatterers. Decent humanity, delivered from the superstitions of divine right, perfectly aware that Caesar and the Mikado, Emperor and King have emerged into life through precisely the same

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

channels as drab and scavenger, turns with loathing from the truculence of the patrician and the subservience of the plebeian in those glittering circles, and is right in its judgment. And yet even this displeasing quality of snobism does but throw into stronger relief the innate disbelief in equality so often found allied with the finest democratic sentiment. It is an acknowledgment, frankly made by most Englishmen, that wherever men assemble there will be the leaders and the led. And then it is indisputable that men attain to virtue by imitation of others, and social elevation, admission to exclusive circles, permits the less favoured, the neophytes, to catch the tone of those who by birth and personal accomplishment are qualified to handle the affairs and direct the counsels of a nation.

There is a good deal of nonsense talked about this business of snobism, usually by those who have seldom had an opportunity of looking at it from the outside, comparing the working of the system with what they find in other parts of the world. Some experience of foreign lands, especially in the East, should help one to realize that it is not without its advantages. From the upper deck of a pilgrim ship one may watch the crowd below and speculate upon the doubtful pleasures of an enforced communism. Or in the crowded streets of a Chinese city one may note that politeness is a necessary quality in a nation of four hundred and fifty millions, if one's day is not to be spent in continuous wrangling or physical conflict with one's neighbour. Or the peril of the exclusive temper when carried to excess may be noted in India, where the food of one man may be spoiled if the shadow of another, of inferior caste, should fall across it. That certainly adds to the complications of life and one does not need to be an impassioned leveller to resent it. Or one may muse upon the spirit of fraternity embodied in the notice outside some white man's club in Shanghai: 'Dogs and Chinese not admitted'. And should one have lived in

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

America one may have learned the curious fact that a whole street of good property may be depreciated and speedily emptied of white tenants by the introduction of one negro family, usually by subterfuge, into one of the houses as tenants. Having noted some of these phenomena in one's wanderings, the returning traveller will not be too bitter in soul when he finds on board ship that the second class passengers are not allowed in the quarters of the first class. Back in his native land he will not be annoyed on finding that the paddock at Ascot is reserved, that Eton does not accept every boy whose parents apply there for his admission, that a decent enough fellow may yet be blackballed on application for membership to a Club, and that Walton Heath is not open to every man who can handle a mashie.

For then he will discover, reflecting upon these things, that the motive of snobism is probably 'like to like'. Men who have been at the same school or college have something in common, sportsmen and athletes are likely to be interested in the same pursuits, artists discover that they have common ground in their work, literary men can talk about each other's books, and philosophers and theologians have a small world of their own and merchants may find common interests in the ups and downs of trade. Hate it or despise it, there is no denying that there is in it all a logic of its own, a justification in the natural desires of men to seek and find in the swarming masses of humanity those elective affinities, that free companionship, without which a man is likely to feel himself alone in the world. For there is no solitude like that of the indistinguishable crowd.

All this is closely allied with the Englishman's passion for private life. That human mush which he has contemplated at close quarters in India and China fills him with a sort of revulsion; though he is not an inhumane person, the possibility of being caught up in that flood of humanity makes no appeal to him. He has a rage for separateness, for the ever-

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

present awareness of his own ego, and because of this the exclusive temper of English snobism appeals to him.

Nor is this a characteristic of one class only. It belongs to his blood and breed. The little house with a small garden, enclosed with a wall or hedge, which is the dream of the prudent artisan, is but another facet of the same disposition. The reformer with a satirical temper may scoff at the little man, his villa of six rooms, with curtained windows, Axminster carpets, aspidistra and all, and invite the deluded victim of capitalism to strike for the collective household, the common porridge pot and all the addenda of communal living. Vainly is the net spread in the sight of any bird; for the Englishman knows instinctively that whatever the alleged advantages it would not suit him. One of the herd he may be, his teachers have been telling him so for the last half century or more, but he likes his own cave and hiding place, his way of escape when the herd becomes too insistent in its attentions. And of course he is right. Snobism is then but the desire to dwell with one's own people, to draw oneself out of the anonymous flood, to find a privacy which is not solitude. It offers a haven to those who have caught a glimpse of the ocean of indistinguishable human life driving towards fathomless gulfs, a brief companionship 'twixt dawn and eve.

CHAPTER XIII

SOCIETY AND THE ARTS

It is a question still undecided whether democracy favours the arts or tends to destrôy them. The city of Athens in its brief hour of bloom is supposed to prove the case for democracy. But then the culture of Athens was founded upon slavery. Abolish the slave, make all men equal before the law, expect each citizen to work, to earn his living, and the arts may fall back into their primitive simplicity. Imaginative and artistic talent requires the stimulus of some powerful motive, ambition, envy, fame, or the urge of poverty, real or relative, to drive the worker to seek excellence. True there is an art which grows like a flower, lily or poppy, the verse of Herrick, the painting of Lippi; but for the finest things wrung from the tortured soul, wrought by the nervous hand, passion and pride and even the lash of poverty may be needed to drive the artist to self-expression. Perhaps of all the artist's foes the deadliest is comfort. A bowing acquaintance with famine has often been of service to incipient genius. Chatterton broke under the strain, Meryon suffered more than was good for him, but Balzac found himself there, as is the way of the strong. A healthy instinct has led each new generation of artists to revolt against the padded life, the rugs and cushions, easy chairs and stocked cupboards, and to choose starvation in a freezing garret rather than the soft security of the paternal roof. For the artist seeks the harsh pungency of life in the raw. As prospective citizen he is mad, as artist he is profoundly sane, resenting whatever comes between him and the bitter savour of life.

Does this account for the magnetism which draws artistic talent to the old civilizations? Rome and Paris were thronged with students, amateurs and professionals, from the Americas.

SOCIETY AND THE ARTS

It is not only that they seek the sun. What they fly from is the gross complacency of the contented millions, the ignorant assurance which despises what is not known, and the unctuous satisfaction born of a facile success. Southern Europe offers to them felicity and misery cheek by jowl, riches and rags near at hand, all the acerbity and sweetness of human life as yet unmastered by the greed of industry, or plastered with the varnish of stale conventions. As pupils and students of the major arts these children of democracy are subjected to the authority of men who themselves create what is excellent, or are skilled in the business of interpreting and teaching it. The egalitarian formula is brought to the judgment bar of the fact. For the differences in artistic endowment are radical and innate. Unless the original endowment is there, singer or fiddler, painter or sculptor is wasting his time, and the volume of capacity, the facility of acquisition will remain constant, a vital distinction between the poor and the rich artistic temperament. At the polling booth all men may be equal, but in the art school the difference between Dauber and Augustus John must be accepted as a natural fact.

Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that a political democracy cannot produce great art. For the capacity to create beauty has no necessary political connotation. The artist is by the nature of his genius wedded to individualism, since what makes him an artist is his possession of a distinct and personal view of the world. But his politics may be of any colour or none. The City States of Italy fought with each other, their citizens quarrelled amongst themselves, Guelphs and Ghibellines or their equivalent could be found in each of them, but this did not prevent them fostering great art. Da Vinci, Raphael and Cellini were as different from each other as men well could be, but on the artistic plane they were at one, each a man of genius after his kind. And theories of government had little influence upon their lives or their work. The painter or sculptor is neither better nor worse because he

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

may be orthodox or otherwise in his political opinions, since they do not enter into the calculation of the values by which he is judged.

Doubtless the demands of the market have some influence upon the artist, even the most independent, and the multitude of Madonnas and Holy Families was to be attributed to the fashion of the time, to the patronage of the Church. But even then the Madonnas are judged by later generations not as being religiously orthodox in style and appearance, but as being well or ill painted. Plutocracy or Communism, or Fascism may in the same manner affect the schools of to-day. Has not Hitler endeavoured to direct German art into the track he would lay down for it, to make of it an instrument for the proclamation of his particular evangel? But anyone who has seen an exhibition of pictures by Socialists or Fascists soon realizes that the doctrinal element is of small importance, that no propagandist fervour can compensate for unskilled design, ill-chosen colour or bungling technique. One may sympathize with the immature talent trying to find utterance but one knows that what is needed is criticism, selection, rejection of the imperfect and the harsh discipline of the atelier for the worker who shows promise.

It is not the political content of any work of art that proves its value. Even in the extreme case of Whitman this is true. He would wish to have his work judged by its worth as the song of democracy, of the common people, but finally it is judged as song, rough edged, crude often, but at times lovely and thrilling song. And Whistler and Sargent and Henry James are artists in paint or words, not because they are democratic in origin but because they have the gift, belong to the untitled aristocracy of talent. And they are judged by their peers.

If Americans throng the studios of Rome and Paris it does not follow that there is no art in their native land. From Europe, which is old and has known many fashions and

SOCIETY AND THE ARTS

modes in all the arts, they may learn much, carrying back to America a talent enriched by contact with many schools and old traditions. And in their own land they are creating now one art which is one of the glories of their race and to which the other arts contribute much. The Old Colonial dwelling has a charm; but their modern architecture, massive, magnificent, in its best examples breathing the very spirit of strength and ageless calm amongst the most restless and active of all peoples, seems to symbolize the eternity of beauty amidst the fluctuations of time. If the purpose of art is to create beauty, then the man who fashioned the skyscrapers of New York, who built that ethereal vision awaiting the voyager as he approaches the city in the early morning hours, or those who designed the obelisk gleaming above the waters of the Potomac, with the Capitol in the distance, have not failed in their task.

And certainly it would be folly to suggest that France, the home of the democratic idea, has failed to produce art of the highest quality. There are a thousand names, drawn from every realm of artistic excellence, to prove the contrary, to show that there the sculptor, the painter, the poet, the prosaist have received their due meed of honour; there at least they are not just tolerated as eccentrics or despised as wastrels but acknowledged as citizens reflecting honour on their nation.

But what is suggested here is that in every artist there is an urge to the creation of the exceptional, the unique, that the men who accomplish these things form an *élite*, a circle into which none can be admitted save by the vote of those already qualified. And it is to the appraisal of this body that the artist's work must be submitted and on their decision that his position must ultimately rest.

For this reason the standards of artistic merit are essentially aristocratic. For the competent judges are the small number of persons whose equipment fits them to be arbiters. Tolstoy

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

argued that the criterion of all art is the popular voice. Dante and Donatello are to be judged by their evocation of fraternal sentiment through their work. The history of great art is a flat denial of his doctrine. Indeed the reverse of this would be nearer the truth, for the perception and enjoyment of art is a means of deliverance from the anonymity of the crowd. It is the key to an ivory tower, lofty and lonely. How could the judgment of artistic merit be a matter of majority voting? The technical skill shown can only be appraised by those who themselves understand and know it, the originality of conception appreciated only by those who have a wide acquaintance with the work done in the same medium by other artists. And beyond this circle of the initiated there is the company of the connoisseurs, that court made up of dealers and buyers which will measure the worth of this piece of craftsmanship in terms of hard cash.

Some artists have won the favour of the first examiners, are recognized as good craftsmen, but fail before the second. Or they may please both for a time, are hailed as sons of genius, ranked high in the hierarchy, only to be taken soon from their premature elevation. Tastes change, fashion alters, cults rise and fall. Martin and West were notable figures in the art world of their day. Who thinks of them now? Millais seemed a second Rubens to some critics of his time, and Landseer's deer and Cooper's sheep entitled them to rank with Paul Potter of the famous Bull. The examples in all the arts are beyond enumeration. Popular judgment has made of certain men something like demigods. And in a few years oblivion has scattered upon them her ashes. There are those who found no support during their lifetime whose work has since become priceless. Contemned in, their own day, humanity has granted them a posthumous renown. It is all irrational, deeply disturbing. Men dream of a world in which ideal values and mercantile worth will coincide, where the best work and the highest price will go together. No such

SOCIETY AND THE ARTS

world has yet risen upon the horizon. The nearest approach to it is the existence of that small company of persons who have learned to distinguish between the mediocre and the excellent. Does this mean that democracy cannot produce great art? That does not follow, but it is certain that the men who create the great art in a democracy and those who appreciate it will form an aristocracy. And by the formation of such aristocracies, untitled perhaps, but not the less real, will democracy be saved from collective mediocrity.

Why stress these things? Is there any danger of the multitude influencing art and its creators? Has it not always been the few who create a style, form a taste? Yes: but there is the possibility that the fine arts may become the shuttlecock of those who seek to rule, by submitting to the taste and judgment of the many. The patron has passed, the committee has arrived and the elected committee represents the common factor in the judgment and taste of the electors. It was Maecenas, not the Roman populace, who made Virgil's work possible. Michaelangelo might quarrel with Pope Julius but he recognized in him a patron bold and magnanimous. From the background of the pawnshop the Medici emerged as rulers and Leo X learned to welcome genius, and but yesterday Pierpont Morgan the financier taught the American people something of his own appreciation of things lovely. And this is important because our modern world has tacitly assumed that everything can be taught to everybody, that nurture is everything and nature little or nothing. And this is not true. Genius is hard to define, but it is certainly not capacity for taking pains, nor a good intelligence concentrated on one task, nor culture, nor strength of will. Beethoven's Sonatas, Shelley's West Wind, Spencer's Philosophy, Turner's Temeraire and a thousand other products of mind and hand are works that stand by themselves, built up of course out of material provided, but given a shape, colour, tone, by a peculiar and original mind. And they can only be

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

known and appraised at first by a select class of persons, who are not dismayed or disgusted by what in these things is new and strange, but can recognize the new idea, novel form, fresh beauty they reveal and by their verdict prepare the multitude to approve what at first they would resent and repudiate.

It is confessed that this aristocracy, ennobled or plain, may err. There are no infallibilities. On a famous occasion Chesterfield betrayed his order by failing to value aright the work of a struggling man of letters. Had Tom Girtin lived I should have starved, said Turner, and Constable died without having convinced the gentry of his country that he was a great artist. But at least the men who blundered in their judgment or ignored their obligations were aware of the essential thing, that beauty exists, that human minds and hands can create it, and that for them to continue creating it there must be an audience, fit though few. And democracy must produce that audience, keep it in being; the organ of discernment and discrimination by which the exquisite creations of human faculty at its highest are mediated to the people, and all the arts are brought within the range of vision of the common man. The fullest expansion of the democratic spirit will have failed of its purpose if it does not include an aristocracy of judgment and taste.

CLASS DIFFERENCES

THE Englishman accepts aristocracy with its accompaniments as an historic fact, as part of that constitution which has been growing, through change, for a thousand years. Believing in monarchy as the natural peak of the social structure, he sees the aristocracy as the buttress and bulwark of the throne, and as the medium through which the monarch is united with his people, the various grades of the social hierarchy forming the skeleton of the body politic. And especially he values the aristocratic phase of life because it shows the human creature enjoying a fullness of being, a vital richness which, if not attainable by all, reveals the potentialities hidden in the average man. Nor does he forget that the aristocrat will be his natural leader in time of danger. Old rags of feudalism, slave mentality, the secret instinct of a race which has known every kind of collective peril, call it what you will; there is scarcely a sea or land upon the globe where the fruits of this instinctive obedience to the natural leader may not be found. It would be a misfortune indeed if, in deference to some abstract theory of equality, this potent tradition were to be destroyed.

The political thinker and the voting citizen would be well advised to consider whether they wish this difference of classes to be abolished. Some of our people, it might appear, would be satisfied with nothing less. Yet, confronted with the choice, complete equality or variation, universal levelling or the retention of gradation, even the ultra-democrat might hesitate. For he might remember that even for him this is not a closed circle. Success in his own line of activity—motor garage, grocers shop, stage, academy, bar—there are a score of roads leading to the top and with hard work, good wits, and luck, always incalculable, he might get there. All this

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

is thought vulgar, common, in our time. Yet it need not be; least of all if the man is honest with himself, refuses to lie in the inner forum, seeks the big prizes and consciously accepts the risks of the game. The mean vulgarity is with those who plaster their speech with phrases about duty, service, common good, sacrifice and the rest of the overworn vocabulary of the social climber. The Yorkshire wool man who gets a baronetcy is no Livingstone or Gordon. The scale of values is different. But he can be good of his kind and, if so, need not be ashamed before the most critical examiner in ethics.

Analyse the idea of the teachers who blame a man for trying to rise in the social scale and it will be found that they resent this ambition as treason to his class. They accept the unproved judgment that every man should remain in the stratum into which he was born. As in primitive societies, what the father did the son shall do, and a score of secret prohibitions and restraints are to keep the individual in his appointed place from birth to death.

Doubtless in the early stages of society this system of status had its advantages. It gave a certain coherence to the herd. But one of the real revolutions of the world is the passage from status to contract, the common man's acquisition of the right to sell his labour as he chooses. This also brings inconveniences, risks, to the worker; but that it is an advance upon the older system few intelligent persons would doubt. And if this means that a healthy society is always in a state of flux, never quite rigid and impermeable, allowing the members of the different classes to rise or fall according to the skill and adaptability, or the changing fortune, of the citizen, this may tend to strengthen rather than weaken the society itself.

Beyond question this desire for personal distinction appeals strongly to the normal man. It is the spur under the touch of which he will endure privation, strain his body and mind to the utmost, in the effort to create something, a business,

CLASS DIFFERENCES

a reputation, a family, which will endure beyond the term of his own brief life. And the recognition of this truth is almost universal. Indeed it is one of the unconscious ironies of our time, that the political leaders whose avowed purpose is to reduce to a vanishing point the sphere of profitable personal adventure in all forms of enterprise, who would make everything of real importance in the world a public property, a Government monopoly, invariably preface their proposals with solemn adjurations to the spirit of initiative, of adventure for reward, by which such prosperity as we enjoy has been created. In Eastern seas the cormorant can be used for fishing with success, but only if he is adequately rewarded with a portion of the catch. Our economists seem to think they can take all the booty and yet keep the bird hunting. It may prove a costly error.

Something might be said on behalf of the social amenities created by an aristocracy. England is a beautiful country, whatever curses may be showered upon its fogs, rains and tempestuous winds by sedentary and invalidish folk. It is the land of the open air for healthy human beings and offers to the view some of the loveliest scenery in the world. And no small part of its beauty is owed to the great houses, parks, and woodlands belonging to the aristocracy. Judging by present trends these may have to go. If in this new order England is to possess a prosperous agriculture, certainly if she is to attempt the impossible, to feed her present population off her own soil, the great estates must go. Small holdings and arduous intensive culture must rule. Every strip of tillable soil must be used. Even more imperative will be this need if the urban dwellers are to be spread over the countryside and villages are to be grouped around the factories of a dispersed industry. No longer will the hounds bay in Leicestershire, and Melton will be famous for boots and blouses rather than for foxes. All these changes and many more may be the outward signs of a process even now in

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

being. Already taxation is stripping the landowner of his money and his property. Daily the great estates are being liquidated. There is little complaint about this. One result of two major wars in thirty years is that the nobility, gentry and middle classes of England have accepted financial stringency as their inevitable destiny. And there has been little lamentation. The war must be paid for, the land must be tilled and the people must be housed. But these things mean a vital change for England. The Government may become the owner of most of the famous houses. They may function for a time as hostels, museums, gathering places for trippers or scenes for antiquarian discourse. But they will no longer be the homes of a class appointed to leadership. And some of the loveliness of which they were the centre will have disappeared from the earth. Whether this will be accepted as final by the English people has yet to be seen. It may be that a belated wisdom will intervene to stop the rot, to keep alive as part of England a class which, often selfish, frequently stupid, has yet stamped its sign and seal upon the pages of our history and, fairly judged, has no reason to be ashamed of its record. And yet one may hesitate to say that this means the extinction of the English aristocracy. For though the form may change the mood of mind out of which social forms are born will remain. The Englishman will still believe that birth and breeding are not without their effect upon conduct, and will expect from the higher social class a power of leadership, of devotion to a cause, and will acknowledge without irony or envy the rights of command which such qualities confer.

There is another reason for such an expectation. We are a little in danger of supposing that the political citizen, his feelings aroused at the time of an election, enjoying the diversion of a political skirmish, is the same person as the worker, taxpayer, friendly neighbour, of the ordinary day. There is a difference. The ancient peoples had their

CLASS DIFFERENCES

Saturnalia, the brief period when all restraints were lifted, minor laws were abrogated, men were free to indulge their primitive wildness. The sober citizen got drunk and played the fool. The day after he returned to his senses, went to his work, opened his shop. Rousseau had the pleasant fancy (serious thought for him) that the Englishman was only free during an election, when the old Government had ceased and the new did not yet exist. Then the people took possession again of their supreme rights. Having once elected a new Government they entered again into the slavery which they created for themselves. Greek, Roman, French, there is the recognition that social man likes at moments to loosen the chain, to act the comedian, without taking his part or himself too tragically. Something of that there is in the Englishman, which is one reason why he often makes changes but seldom makes revolutions.

Thus it is not uncommon for those in revolt to speak as though nothing would satisfy the British electorate but a complete reversal of our history, the overturning of all institutions. The effort to acquire wealth, the search for distinction, are morally iniquitous. This is common form in the political struggle, along with such personal depreciation of one's opponent as may be well within the law, libel being always dangerous. The observer, ignorant of English habits, noting these things, might be looking for the barricades, expecting the military. The crowded hall, the massed assembly, looks dangerous. But there is little need for alarm. Sometimes the mob will get out of hand, but usually the excitement is kept within recognized bounds. And when it is over these men return to their usual manner of living, the day's work, the pint at the pub, the club or chapel meeting, or a mild gamble on a horse or dog, without bitterness if defeated, without great exultation if they have won. For they are sportsmen and, behind all the rhetoric of the hustings, with a scepticism humorous but invincible, they see

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

politics as a great game to be played according to the rules. Yesterday your citizen seemed a fanatic, to whom coronets and ermine were anathema, waiting, expectant, for the millennial dawn; to-day he is cool, cheerful, tolerant, hoping for better things, but well aware that he must take the world as it is and make what he can of the good since he cannot have the best. It is disconcerting to the impassioned reformer, this cool dubiety over which the sonorous platitudes roll, like rain over rock, but it lies deep in the nature of Englishmen and has helped to make them what they are.

This alone suggests that they who would change, from the foundations, the mode of thought and action by which this people has maintained itself for nine centuries, must prove their case. If they wish the nation to pass from a highly differentiated to a strictly equalitarian social order they must argue it out, with its incessantly fructifying consequences, in the public forum. And they must pose the primary question — do the British people want equality? Translated into social facts, income, clothing, housing, status, seen at close quarters, the Englishman does not like it, does not want it and will not have it. True he dislikes squalor and would mitigate or remove it where he can; but miles of ribbon building will not satisfy his aesthetic instinct. Good beef and bread and bacon and beer, with all the accessories, he appreciates, but has no desire to have his portion served, by equal measurement, in a communal kitchen. And the England that he loves is that of great Downs where noble horses run, the streets of the city with their infinite human variety, coster, bobby, cabby, Limehouse and Piccadilly, moor and stream, the darkly glittering panorama of life, with liberty to take and enjoy where he can. And that he may have liberty he leaves equality to those who love it.

Democracy strains after equality, not without some success. But there are hindrances, and the difference of race, the variation of colour is one of the most difficult. In these

CLASS DIFFERENCES

islands we know little of it at first hand, though the man who has been out East and returned is only too well aware of its import. Our ignorance of the facts and our lack of imagination, our happy insularity, explain our casual treatment of an awkward problem. We who know the Indian by an occasional sample seen in some seaport town, to whom the black face of the pure negro is still something of a curiosity, whilst the Chinese come within the range of our vision as seamen or laundrymen and as that but seldom, have the habit of making large generalizations about the human race and expecting the rest of the world to accept them. As rulers of large provinces, holders of Colonies, we ought to know all the questions and most of the answers about racial issues, and our Consuls, Governors and Viceroy are perfectly well aware of the thorns that grow round such questions, but our people know them scarcely at all. And to speak truth, the only person who has a right to an opinion on such matters is the man who has lived with other races, knows by experience the complications that arise, and has had forced upon his immediate attention the perplexities revealed when men try to equate democracy with racial differences. It is in America near the southern borders, in India, where the white man is to the coloured races as a bundle of driftwood in the midst of a lake, or in Africa, where the Europeans, British or Dutch are always threatened by absorption in the sea of black blood, that these problems are seen at close quarters.

In such situations the broad generalizations break down in the presence of unpleasant realities. Thus the Southern States of America still cling to the poll tax, under which the negro must pay a dollar before he can vote, and since many of them will not pay the dollar they are to that extent disfranchised. All most regrettable and very annoying to the political thinker enamoured of the one man one vote theory. But quite intelligible if one remembers the circumstances,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

and seeks to put oneself in the place of the Southern white man. Imagine tens of thousands of black men in England, competing for jobs as dockers or clerks or navvies, and consider with what affectionate regard they would be viewed by the workers in these crafts. Jan Smuts, the most distinguished Afrikaner of his day, a humanist of the first class, cannot accept racial equality and for the best of reasons: he has seen the danger of race absorption at his own door, knows at first hand the differences between black and white mentality and believes that there is a permanent difference of level between the two races. And this is not the prejudice of a Boer, but the considered judgment of a philosopher and a statesman.

When Gandhi was young he went to South Africa to practise as a lawyer. Travelling with a first class ticket, wearing the clothes of a gentleman and the turban of his country, he was ejected from the carriage as an impudent nigger who should be taught his place. The Afrikaner had little apprehension of the difference between Sikh and Bengali, Brahmin and Untouchable, to whom they were all niggers. What is awkward in Cape Town, unpleasant in Washington, is deadly dangerous in Simla, or Bombay. Curzon was entirely justified in following right through the military hierarchy, until he had cornered them, the smart young officers who had kicked out of the railway carriage the Hindoo of birth and wealth who had dared to seat himself beside them. Macaulay was correct in deciding that English should be the language spoken throughout official India, that the natives should be taught to speak and write it. But Macaulay and Curzon might well have asked themselves whether this democratic attitude is compatible with the maintenance of a militant suzerainty over 350 millions of coloured people. And later history seems to confirm the doubt. And the same perplexity is found in Australia, that land of free men; and New Zealand, where the rights of labour have become primary obligations for the citizen.

CLASS DIFFERENCES

Free admission of Chinese and Japanese to those countries, with the same rights of citizenship as white men, and there would have probably been no Pearl Harbour incident, no war in the Pacific. There would have been no need for war since the Chinese or the Japanese, or both combined, the yellow men in fact, could have outworked, outlived and, in the course of decades, not centuries, expelled the white race from those lands, a fact of which the whites in those favoured countries are not unaware and which explains their tempered welcome or latent hostility to the yellow man's presence. Democratic equality! Certainly, for the favoured class, the chosen race, but for the lesser breeds without the law, most certainly not. What is it but Athens over again, with its careful selection of responsible citizens, cultured, alert, brave, and its slave population working in the Laurium mines? Malaya, Burma, Siam, all over the East, this matter of the colour bar is no academic question, least of all something to be settled by Sabbath moralities, but a vital issue involving the lives and fortunes of about eight million whites and a thousand million Asiatics.

The answer will probably have to be in the terms of Smuts, an acknowledged difference of levels. Should Anglo-Saxon democracy disdain this halfway house, refuse all compromise for the idealist and fraternalist, then it must accept mixture of races, a mongrel population, ultimate extinction of the white race by the biologically stronger, or the annihilation of the white man's overlordship by sheer weight of numbers at the polling booth. Here too democracy is on trial and a racial aristocracy may be the only way to obtain some elements of democracy.

CHAPTER XV

DEMOCRACY ON GUARD

THE popular theory is that democracies favour peace. One would hope that it might be true and there is some reason to support the idea when, in fairly prosperous times, one sees the multitude of plain people going about their business, seeking their pleasures, with no obvious controlling hand but that of the white-gloved policeman directing the traffic. When life is relatively easy democracies do not seek war, least of all since war became a business of the people rather than of the professional soldier. Yet diplomats and political leaders are not so sure that the popular theory covers all the ground. Sometimes the populace takes the bit between its teeth and needs a giant hand to prevent it bolting to destruction. In 1789 France made war, as a democracy, under one commander or another, and continued to do so until she failed through loss of blood in 1815. It was a democracy that fought the greatest of modern civil wars in 1866 not, as we will persist in telling ourselves, over the question of freeing the slave, but over the more vital issue of whether the United States should remain one and indivisible, whether the South had the right to secede. And as a peace-loving democracy, which is how we like to think of ourselves, we British have managed to get through a good deal of miscellaneous fighting during the last hundred years. Yet the popular theory asserts itself and we continue to believe that with full democracy wars will cease.

Unquestionably there is little support for this hope in the natural world. There the struggle for survival seems to be universally operative. From dandelion and chickweed to pine and oak the effort to live, creation, destruction, and transformation in a new creation dominates the picture. Nor does the animal world, cold blooded or warm, in ocean depths or

DEMOCRACY ON GUARD

jungle twilight, respond more sympathetically to our hopes. To eat or be eaten is the law, and nature scatters the seeds of life with a wildly generous hand only that through the interminable struggle the swift, the strong and the lucky may live to continue the breed. And as the biologist and the chemist continue their investigations this tension of strife repeats itself, the cell, the molecule, being but a soldier fighting for life against a host of foes, and the world of the phagocytes is an arena of conflict not less impressive than the scenes of human carnage.

Is it likely that this process should cease to be operative in the life of man, seeing that man also is part of nature? Does evolution stop at man, or change its mode of action? One has hoped for such a change, has thought of spirit dominating matter, of evolution along new lines away from the endless scuffling and scrambling for food and light and the sun's warmth. And one does not wish to believe that such hopes are vain. Yet an honest judgment must confess that the struggle goes on, that mind and spirit cannot release man from his temporal and material integument, change him to an ethereal presence, but that he lives still by corn and flocks and coal and oil and all these products of the soil and of the mine for which the machines he has invented call incessantly if they are not to rust and rot in idleness. These things the British people have chosen to forget. It is their habit. Not that they are ignorant of them, far from it, none know better, but they hate to think along these lines, it is such a depressing business, so they turn to their factories, tennis courts, club rooms, and forget it.

The British have also a notion that the rest of the world should adopt their ideas of what is right and proper and act accordingly. Should this not happen they do not curse or even blame the defaulters, but merely class them as outsiders. A harmless peculiarity when confined to football or cooking, but dangerous in more important matters, as when, in the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

relations between States, war is threatened, and one seizes the opening gambit without giving notice, and starts shooting without declaring his intentions. This sort of thing is hard to understand and forgive. It is Napoleon against the Austrians once more, ignoring the rules. And yet the British of all people should know what to expect, for Hobbes was one of them, and he laid it down once for all that there are no moral rules in war, only force and fraud. Real war is not a game, but an all-in struggle, with survival, national and racial, as the prize. Underneath all the conventions, conferences, leagues, convoked and created by the tender-minded there lies the ultimate challenge, your life or mine, blown on the winds by the bugle of war. When democracy is in the saddle, business reasonably good, the people resent being reminded of these unpleasant truths, consequently their political leaders are careful not to make them public. Instead they dwell on happier things, speak of Jerusalem, England's green and pleasant land, remembering the useful tag 'Laugh and the world laughs with you', and generally behave as if all the year were flaming June.

This is why the democracies are seldom prepared for war. It is not the fault of the politicians. Let any one of their critics play the role of Cassandra and see the sort of reception he meets with. 'My people love to have it so' is always true, and only the very brave and the very sure will dare to run counter to that natural inclination. And yet the state of war is constant and peace is the interval between two wars. This must be so for, in spite of all that peaceable folk desire or do, the world will not remain stationary. Change and decay, growth and expansion, are of the very texture of life, personal and political. Trade routes alter, industry is modified by invention, commerce changes its direction, dynasties die and new ones are born, nations rise or fall and watchful suspicion, organized espionage, goes on until the explosion comes.

DEMOCRACY ON GUARD

Surely then it is not cynicism but plain sense to admit that democracies must be prepared for war, since the form of government, or even an apparent change in the dispositions of the masses, cannot alter those conditions which seem to be for ever attendant upon the progress, the evolution, of man. If it is said, as it is by able men, that mankind must either abolish war or accept the certainty of its own self-destruction, that civilization and war cannot co-exist, the answer is that the assertion is not true. The jeweller still flourishes in spite of burglars, footpads and gangsters, and civilization will continue, modified according to changing conditions, doubtless different in many ways from that to which we are accustomed, but still civilization, though it be constantly threatened by potential or actual war.

Whether democracies can make war effectively is another question, on the answer to which may depend the ultimate fate of all democratic theories. If they cannot, they will disappear before theories and systems which, whatever their defects, are better adapted to successful living on this planet. And on the face of it the judgment would seem to be that democracies cannot make war effectively. For democracy works by committees, consultation, compromise; and war does not lend itself to that method of avoiding sharp angles. War works by command, through a hierarchy of authority. For this method the democracies have little affection, since it cuts across their preconceptions; hence the delays, setbacks, misfortunes, which beset them at first when they take to the sword. On the other hand they often fight better than their enemies. As free they have something to lose, as proud they resent defeat, as citizens they have a sense of fraternity, beyond the regiment, the army, with their tribe or nation. This gives morale to the citizen soldier, and though it will not win by itself or compensate for the absence of equipment, it is a force always to be reckoned with. Nor should one forget the advantage of swiftly

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

changing their leaders, which the democracies have. War intensifies the process by which in a democracy the career is made open to all the talents. Jealousies may be keener, but the very intensity of the rivalry sends the incompetent to the rear and brings the strong and fortunate man to the front.

Similarly with industry and applied science. The call for ability, for exceptional talent and rare qualifications runs through the nation, touches every grade of society. To the humanist it is regrettable, but it is certainly true that under the stress of war new realms of knowledge are explored, fresh applications of scientific ingenuity are made, strides taken in weeks which in peace time would have required years. Gases, explosives, food supply, engine power and a hundred other forms of human productivity have been explored, used, mastered under the pressure of war at a speed which peace times could not have equalled. All of which is no apology for war. One does not now burn the house down to roast a pig. It is merely a reminder of things to be remembered if war is to be judged aright. Democracy can adapt itself to these changes more speedily than other systems, can draw strength more swiftly than its rivals from these recurrent dog fights.

Or take another instance of gain from war. One of the abiding maxims of Adam Smith is that defence comes before opulence, to which may be added the truth that defence will always consist in the vigour of the men defending a country. All the mechanism commanded by science is unavailing if the men are not there, and that of the right kind, to use it. And it is all too true that before 1914 the depletion of the countryside, the failure of the agricultural system to keep young men on the land, the actual life of the great towns, late hours, artificial light, tinned foods, perhaps, lack of exercise, and above all deprivation of fresh air, had damaged the health, undermined the physical stamina of our people. We

no longer had the same proportion of robust deep-chested men as in the early days of the century. These things gave some headaches to men who were concerned for the future of the British race; statesmen, medicos, biologists were not at ease in their minds over what the change, if it were real, might mean. There is still plenty of debating on the theme, but about the need for considering and remedying the evil there was no uncertainty. Since then nutrition has become one of the catchwords of the hour, vitamins for ever in the Press and on the air, milk for babes a slogan and strong meat for men an important aid to victory. Results from all this are, the best-fed army and navy that ever served under the flag and a generation of men as hard and healthy as any in the world. On the physical side the British man of to-day is probably stronger built and better nourished, whether working in factory, mill or mine, or serving with the colours, than were ever his predecessors. And it is probable that this is a permanent gain to the nation, for democracy can only live in this world if it is willing and able to defend itself. That lesson has been learned.

There is another feature in this change worth noting. It would be untrue to say that a new courage has been developed in modern war, since courage is always fundamentally the same, a willingness to challenge death and the accessories of death. But that old courage has been turned into new channels and British manhood has adapted itself with marvellous celerity to the fresh claims made upon it. The cool audacity of the flying man has become almost proverbial. Not less so the boldness of those who handle and control the giant mechanisms now part of the apparatus of war. The elephants of Hannibal must have been awe inspiring to the Roman soldiery, but a battalion of tanks could be more alarming still, and the modern soldier has become accustomed to dealing with car and lorry and tank and the guns they carry, as the men of Crécy and Poitiers

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

used the longbow and the sword against the armoured chivalry of France. Once it was feared that the more complex nervous structure of the townsman would be unequal to the strain of modern war. Education, whether of street, school, or factory brings reflection, introspection, and the dangers attendant thereupon. Your introvert makes a poor soldier, with his self-pity, broodings about fate and foreknowledge absolute, and there were those who said that modern man would crack under the thunder of guns and the flash and flame of bombs. Some did, others were hurt, wounded in soul if not in body, and of them there was born that literature of disgust and lamentation which filled our libraries after 1918. But the mass stood firm, lived through the dreadful years, hating them of course—who would not—but enduring to the end. And these are the men who begat, not in sorrow but in pride, the sons who hold the lines, on land and sea and in the air, behind which we live and labour to-day. Father and son alike do not defend war, do not apologize for it, you don't apologize for an earthquake; they accept it as one of the conditions of living, of freedom, and endure it, as the sailor endures the tempest and the shepherd the storm. And it is this spirit of stern acceptance, of stoical endurance under the whip of destiny, which augurs well for the future of democracy.

What sort of man then is he, this citizen in arms with whom we are all so familiar in these days? At least he has this quality, supremely necessary for the maintenance of life in this world, an eye for the fact. He can look at the truth, however unpleasant, without being utterly shaken. As a professional the soldier has not always appealed to the British people. They remember Cromwell's men, Ironsides in battle, but difficult to deal with in times of peace and few of them lovers of that Palaver house which is the core of our institutions. And in later times the Absent Minded Beggar and the Shropshire Lad gave him the appeal of pathos, but

DEMOCRACY ON GUARD

hardly the grave dignity of citizenship. And yet there was little reason for this attitude of mere tolerance, for the soldier has always been a pretty faithful replica of the civil population. The men of Busaco and Talavera were not saints, but neither were their countrymen, being in fact rather addicted to the pride of life and the lusts of the flesh and the making of good commercial bargains. Yet if no ascetic, still less was the soldier the bloodthirsty ogre of the nursery rhyme and fiction makers, a savage creature harking back to the Cromagnon type. There were pious homes where something like this might be believed, and the redcoat seen as the cloak of Beelzebub, much to the annoyance of the Ruths and Priscillas of the family, but the nation knew better, refusing to see him as a museum piece, a fossilized relic of an age never to recur. For the men of the nation must have suspected that in defiance of all the Methodisms and Quakerisms and other vendors of general pacification, this rather kindly, good humoured fellow with the shako and sword might be needed again.

And now it is an open question whether the soldier is not the true peace-maker, the really blessed one. For into this confused warring world, torn by its sects, dogmas, ideologies, theories of all things in heaven and in earth, the soldier brings some kind of order. Conflict ceases at his approach and where the tramping regiments have passed, in Europe and India, China and Africa, the plough drives a furrow, the cattle graze, and the trader carries his pack to the market town. After the soldier comes the policeman, and with him law and the established rule of order and peace. The soldier has ceased to be the hired assassin, the mercenary cut-throat of the Italian cities and German kings, and is becoming what we know him to be now, the citizen in arms.

Inevitably, when the army is drawn from the whole manhood of the nation, there will be great varieties of temperament and character. To some the barracks and the camp

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

will be the school where a new and welcome discipline of body and mind may be learned, to others a period of boredom and petty irritations, or again an opportunity for scrounging, for becoming a picker-up of unconsidered trifles. But under the law which makes of every able-bodied man a potential soldier these variations of the individual are moulded into a common form, and the citizen army is born. The man who is the unit of this sum, as now we know him, is no ascetic, knows the flavour of good beer, has a freedom of speech not suitable for spinsters' parties, and knows the way of a man with a maid as well as his boldest forbears, all of which may distress fond mothers of only sons, who cannot bear to see their darlings pass beyond the stage of velvet coat and golden curls, but none of which should trouble those who understand that this is how boys become men.

Least of all will these things lead the observer to forget the qualities which are of the stuff and fibre of his profession. In the presence of imminent danger and threatened death, the swift judgment and bold action, the hardihood and fidelity of the soldier are seen against their proper background. Then we know that the graces and refinements, so stressed in the sunlit days of peace, are no substitute for the bone and sinew of strong manhood. Of these things we should remind ourselves when, living remote from peril, we hear anaemic souls complaining of the indecorums and coarseness of the soldier, as though he who rescues them from flood or fire must be shaved and manicured for his task. Nor should one forget the large generosity which marks him in times of crisis, nor the sacrificial spirit so notable in his character, nor the masculine comradeship which has always distinguished the military life, where the fraternity so vainly sought in civil society spontaneously develops. He who has known the fellowship, the friendship of such men has, whatever his fortune, gathered some of life's richest fruits and fairest flowers.

DEMOCRACY ON GUARD

Accustomed as our people have been to interpret the soldier through the features of Colonel Blimp, the vocabulary of the sergeant major and the suet pudding visage of the raw recruit, the new man, in his ugly but useful battle-dress, they find a baffling figure. He is no more the village idiot than he is the romantic figure, centaur with the flashing sword, of Delacroix or Meissonier, or the popular 'Scotland for Ever' print. Science and circumstance have made of him an artisan, skilled in the ways of mechanism, adaptable to every terrain and equal to every peril. He has learned the first lesson of the army, unquestioning obedience to authority, but he is no longer of those who do not reason why, nor is his courage that of the bull-headed peasant, obstinate but unthinking. Bomb and shell and hidden mine have made him wary and wily, and carburettors and batteries, charts and maps, insulators and chronometers, tools all of his new trade, have compelled him to think. With the right men to lead him he can go anywhere and do anything, but he must be understood, and is rightly hard upon those who think of him still in terms of cannon fodder and use him as such. It is absurd to think of him as a figure of farce, for if he is the most useful servant of the community, the tribe, he is also the most dangerous, since he is the armed man thinking, the guardian, but the critical guardian, of democracy.

Certainly it is all to the good that the civil population should expect great things from its military servants, but the time has gone when a battalion and a major can be expected to work miracles because they wear the king's uniform. The soldier must be trained, equipped with all the implements of his profession, habituated by rehearsals to his craft, made master of his tools. The day of cheapness in Army estimates is over and the nation that would be secure in the modern world must foot the bill. If we have lived in a fool's paradise, oblivious of the smouldering fires that menaced roof and granary, we are awake at last and if ever again we fall back

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

to slumberous ease and lethargic indifference we have but ourselves to blame.

That the military mind has the defects of its qualities is freely allowed. The habit of command may disqualify for patient persuasion, implicit obedience may sap initiative, and the soldier may fail in the political arena. Yet Marlborough and Wellington were not without diplomatic skill, and Wolseley and Roberts and Kitchener could work at the conference table as well as on the battlefield. The cool intellect and the strong purpose are effective in both spheres, as the great Boer leader Jan Smuts has demonstrated in our day, and although the civil and military realms must ever remain separate, our democracy must learn to respect the intelligence of the soldier and give it due weight in the councils of the nation.

CHAPTER XVI

ENDS AND MEANS

THERE is no difficulty in stating the war aims of the democracies. It has been done in various public deliverances of the leading statesmen. Put simply it means that the democracies wish to live in their own way, keep what they have got and be safe. It is the legitimate wish of every retired grocer. When Wilson declared that the world must be made safe for democracy he was voicing the feelings of all the decent people who live in suburbia, but whether the sentiment would satisfy the world's proletariat or content the dissatisfied States is less certain. And it is not certain that the winning of this war will ensure eternal safety for the democracies. The fruits of victory, if any, must be secured, and to this end the life of the democratic peoples must be so arranged that if the necessity should arise they can strike at once to protect themselves.

They must therefore be prepared for the consequences arising from the possible migrations of peoples, competition for the fertile and salubrious lands still unoccupied, increase of scientific knowledge, failing harvests in spite of better agriculture, envy and hatred of the rich by the poorer populations, and all other potential causes of war, few or none of which can be accurately foreseen or prevented.

And as a preliminary to this the democracies must learn that nations are not and cannot be motivated by altruistic intentions alone, and that those who are the fortunate possessors of the better parts of the earth's surface, who have obtained control of the larger share of the world's wealth, either by natural situation, by conquest or negotiation, must be prepared to defend their property against all comers. Unless these things are taken to heart and conduct

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

regulated by them, the democracies cannot expect to enjoy for long the peace and repose they desire.

The immediate security of the democracies rests upon a good understanding between Britain and America. That is the truism of our time. But if it is to endure it must be founded upon the solid bases of mutual interest as well as good will. The Americans have found out that isolation is not possible, one of the major discoveries of the century, and also that it does not pay. Pearl Harbour may prove the most important date in this war, after the Battle of Britain, since it compelled the American to put on his boots and take down his rifle. Only those who know something of this great nation, its justifiable pride, its abounding confidence, can understand the intensity of the shock which taught them that they were not immune. And the swift consequences of that experience, the partnership developed between America and Britain, the sequence of economic and political relations which followed, are amongst the most momentous events of our days. To make these relations permanent, so far as anything is permanent in a changing world, is one of the major political tasks of the future. And it can only be carried through if there is a clear recognition of the part that national self-interest must play therein.

A century ago men were growing tired of the Holy Alliance. Their spokesman, Canning, declared things were getting back to normal, when it would be each for himself and the devil take the hindmost. A shrewd forecast. Humanity will submit for a time to be wound to the top of its compass, but the pitch must not be kept at that height for long. Men sink back upon a lower note. The shopkeeper will not wear the tragedian's hood. Metternich knew it well, he who summed his experience in the words 'No excitement lasts for long'. That the statesman should know this is the condition of his existence as a statesman. Wilson found it true and broke his heart over the discovery. Concerning all which the point is

ENDS AND MEANS

that America is bound to consider first what may be good for her own national wellbeing. The policing of the oceans, a vital necessity, may convince her that it is to her own interest to preserve close and friendly relations with Britain. But realism must rule in thought as it will rule in action. No horde of lecturers, preachers, professors, following the track of the *Mayflower* to proclaim good will to American citizens, can keep the bonds of unity firm, unless tangible and ponderable benefits result from such unity. That Americans speak English is probably the most important political fact, pace Bismarck, but it is not enough, and insistence on it is not an emollient, but an irritant. Americans are sensitive on the point of patriotism, proud of their institutions, history, methods, success, wealth, jealous of the suspicion of patronage, capable of sentiment but intensely realistic in action, fully aware, through their best brains, of the immense prospects opening before their country in this new age. Good partners as any in the world, but to be treated always with respect, our equals, perhaps our betters.

Nor can the statesman forget the recalcitrant elements in American society, the embittered Irish, nursing their wrath to keep it warm, the unassimilated German block, amongst the best citizens of the States, but remembering the Fatherland; the crowds who have flocked thither from Mediterranean lands, not hostile to Britain, true and loyal Americans, but by no means of New England breed. And the negro, that imponderable, incalculable element in the future fortunes of the States, about which and its influence on democracy, there and elsewhere, the men who know most are prepared to say least, the theme is so big, its edges so ragged and loose. Knowing these things, the British must not expect too much, must realize that Pittsburgh and 'Frisco are not the same as Hull or Bristol, that the appeal cannot be to fraternity alone, that anything and everything must be given and done within the realm of the possible to win the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

consideration, the regard, of the American people. Hyperbole is vexing, universal judgments generally wrong, but it is probably true that never before has one nation given so generously its aid to another as America to Britain during these years. It is for the British to make it plain that in the long-term account America has not lost on the transaction. There will be many opportunities for doing this. The States have entered into a new stage of their development. For the future they must be, like the British, a warlike if not a military people. Unless all the omens are false Japan will have made her stroke of state in vain. She will be defeated, but she will not be utterly broken. She will remain, a military and naval Power, with eighty millions of people, disciplined to endurance, patient in privation, dreaming still of Nippon's Imperial might and glory. It is the story of Prussia after Jena over again: Democracy in the States must be in armour, the sword near to the hammer and the trowel, for there will be an enemy, known and avowed, at her gates. For the Pacific has become the scene and the prize of war. Australia, New Zealand and the Islands are already drawn within the orbit of this struggle, must cease to think themselves the lucky possessors of a cheap Paradise, must breed and fight or surrender, and along with Britain, aligned with her, must pay back in service to the Anglo-Saxon race and the democratic cause the debt we all owe to the United States for help in time of need.

Then there is Russia. To the British mind Communism and Nazism and Fascism are practically the same. Britain and America are opposed to all three, in principle and in detail. State ownership, Corporate ownership and control, management of business by State officials, Commissars or Gauleiters, with the Government, which means the body of politicians then holding power, always in the background as the immediate employers and controllers, all this, however disguised, makes no appeal to the British mind. Under

ENDS AND MEANS

every mask it is a tyranny and no amount of affection for the human race, desire to enfranchise the masses, promises of economic freedom or what else, can disguise its essential character, that of a form of regimentation, hateful as the enforced submission of prisoners under the turnkey's eyes.

All this was perceived and felt by the Trade Union leaders in our own country and accounts naturally enough for the intensity of their resentment and their determination to prosecute the war from their side with uncompromising vigour. For they realized that if German, Italian or Russian methods were enforced upon the workers of this country at the edge of the sword, their own authority and leadership would be cut short as by a knife. Their lives, positions, and all their ideas about the future of the working classes were in peril. And they were right. Transport House may be in itself a potential tyranny, threatening at times to shift the role of national Government from the Commons to an extraneous body. And the British people, once made aware of the danger, would resent this just as strongly as they would the assumption of power by the Carlton Club; being determined, in their obstinate way, that democratic methods, the ordered quarrel of debate, shall still be the real source of Government authority; a disposition which is the best of all safeguards against the tyranny of the Sections, be they left, right or centre. But the Unions leaders were certainly correct in foreseeing their own danger and, in saving themselves, helped to save the workers from a despotism which, once enthroned here, would be as painful and bitter and as difficult to dislodge as any to be found in Italy or Germany.

The British diplomatist in Russia now and in the future has to keep in mind these two sides of his problem; that between the two countries there are real and deep divergences of opinion and custom as to the management of the State and the situation of the citizen, and also that they are and, we hope, will long remain allies, helping each other in

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

the cause they both at the moment serve, and prepared to continue helping each other through mutual counsel, through profitable trade, and through continuous and hearty collaboration in the preservation of peace in Europe and the world. And frankness on both sides, with that friendly politeness which is the cement of good neighbourship, will greatly help towards this desirable end.

For there will be material sufficiently perplexing in the relations, after the war, between British democracy and the Soviet Union of Russia. In these regions of speculation no one should prophesy, but one may guess without risking one's money on a chosen theory. The position is partially clarified by the tremendous achievement of the Russian people in the war. They have fought the Germans to a standstill, have saved their own country, and have finally blocked the Teutonic drive towards the East. If this achievement has surprised the Anglo-Americans, it has startled and horrified the Germans, especially the more thoughtful of them. For it means that the German people are enclosed, not artificially and politically, but naturally, humanly, by British sea control on the one side and Russian military might on the other. There may be accidents, swayings of the walls, but these will pass, the walls will remain. Two things have probably changed the course of history in this war, apart from the Anglo-American alliance: the discovery that China cannot be conquered by the Japanese, that Russia has become a scientific military power. It was the last thing that the Germans wished for or expected. The basket of vipers is watched on both sides by men at the ready with axe and gun. It is now therefore of the first importance that the British and Russians should understand each other, respect each other, and remain on friendly terms, for each has much to give and each may profitably learn from the other's differing experiences. And there is one advantage in dealing with the Russian people, their leaders are consciously and explicitly

ENDS AND MEANS

political realists. Their ideology is not that of the Anglo-Americans, but it is intelligible, historically comprehensible, capable of being woven, as a contributory element, into the fabric of international comity.

Russia was an autocracy without a middle class, in which the revolt took place at the same time as physical science had placed large resources in the hands of those who grasped the reins of power. Out of the revolt there was born an oligarchy, something like the Ten of Venice, each of them arriving at their post by the path of election, but being arrived, having only their fellows and equals with whom to struggle for control. Out of this medley comes Stalin, a stronger man than Hitler, certainly less given to hysteria and rhetorical efflorescence. This Camarilla of able men, hardened politicians, without scruple where politics are concerned, stirred to enthusiasm for an idea, is in a position to affect seriously the lives of the multitude, the more so because there are no real powers left standing to oppose them and no forms or rules to be acknowledged.

Then comes the era of Planning, which is again relatively easy for two reasons. The Mir or Commune is an old institution in Russia, which has made the transition to communistic ownership easier there than it might have been elsewhere. And again Russia is a vast country with twenty-three persons to the square mile, as compared with four hundred persons to the square mile in Britain. There is room for expansion on all sides, and the exploitation of such an immense territory will occupy the attention and absorb the energies of the people and their leaders for at least a century. Those leaders, a small number in comparison with the two hundred millions of the people, must, on grounds of self-interest alone, work together more or less, for anarchy and internecine strife might spell disaster for them. Being political realists they are aware of this and also of the need for preparedness against any external foe. Already they have

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

given proof of their skill in doing these things. War has taught them the need for authority, power to command, will to obey, the necessity for some kind of social hierarchy if there is to be orderly development throughout their vast inheritance. What they have done is the best piece of political engineering in the modern world, performed with a realistic thoroughness which leaves nothing to be desired; more merciless than the English performance of the 1640's or the French in the 1790's. But even these things do not make the new system sacrosanct. Division of land, elimination of the privileged ones, liquidation of the opposition, are the first steps in a process often repeated. They give but slight indications of the full and final form to be taken by Russian civilization.

Already it is plain that equality of reward has gone by the board. Men are paid according to their alleged worth, as workers or leaders. A new aristocracy of mechanics, overseers, or politicians is being created. Private property is asserting itself again, and if the past is an indication of the future, will increase its hold upon the people, as the process of differentiation becomes more intense and the individual consciously separates himself from the surrounding mass. Communism is the economic matrix of society, the primitive form out of which the richer form must grow. To propose it as the goal of human effort is to ask humanity to return upon its paces, to seek the cave out of which it has come. And humanity will refuse to do this. The Russians having defeated the enemy and saved their country, entering upon a period of peace, will again give room to the acquisitive impulse and the energy of emulation. The Oligarchy must appeal to these motives to retain their power and in so doing will create for themselves an Opposition, secret or open, ready to engage in the struggle for power. Not as immoral but as natural activities should these be seen, the expression of those tensions by which life maintains itself, and out of

ENDS AND MEANS

which, in the case of Russia, there may be born some form of constitutionalism or Parliamentary democracy.

But can Russia become democratic in the sense accepted by the British and American peoples? If it does, with a population of three hundred millions by 1971, which is what the leaders of Russia are hoping for, she will be by far the mightiest of the European Powers. For although Asia is her background fifteen out of sixteen of her people live in Europe and will increasingly have contacts with the European world. And although 82 per cent of her people at the time of the Revolution lived outside of the towns, she is rapidly becoming, under the pressure of war and the driving power of her rulers, one of the great industrial countries of the world. And though it is unlikely that the towns will ever surpass in total numbers the population of the rural districts, it is probable that they will lead or drive the country people along the political road chosen by the towns. Out of the new industrialism of the towns there might arise, in the strife of personalities, something like democracy. At present there is little if any political freedom, there are no free elections and equality is hard to find, even the equality given by the right to vote and the impartiality which deals out justice rigorously to every man whether he be high or low in the estimation of his fellows. But these things may come. If they do then there will come also, not only the differences in skill and reward for skill, which exist already, but some differences of class and caste, arising from function and vocation, such as are known in Britain and America.

Suppose that this does not happen, that Russia remains and continues in essence a Communistic State. Then the rest of the world will have to accommodate itself to the fact. One fear may be dismissed. It is unlikely that there will be an ideological war against the world for the benefit and diffusion of Communistic ideas. Such wars are not unknown, but usually they are started in the first flush of enthusiasm,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

with a vast reserve of youthful energy seeking to express itself through the medium of armed battalions. This was the secret of the Moslem invasion of Europe, those fierce conflicts in which the Arab came so near to the possession and control of the Western world. Such was the orgy of fighting which began with the French uprising of 1789, when half-starved armies swept over Europe, inflamed by an ideological passion. But Russia has already spilt the blood of millions on some of the hardest fought battlefields in history. She has had her embryo Napoleon in Tukachevsky, shot for treason in 1936, and her people have had more than enough of the glories and miseries of conflict to keep them quiescent, unless attacked from without, for years to come.

If the grand experiment succeeds and a more or less rigid Communism rules the country, there will certainly be a gradual uplifting of the population to a higher level of comfort and culture than has hitherto been known in Russia. The peasant and the artisan will at least reach the standard of the lower middle class in Europe. And there may be for some few years one of those stationary periods in which population and subsistence balance each other. Yet as population increases, vast as are the resources of the country, and far off as that time may be, there may be some internal friction, for the levelling process has never yet satisfied the desires or controlled the impulses of a people mentally alert, and there will be readjustments according to the changing conditions of the national life.

Then there may arrive, no one can say, a new Imperialism, not ideological but military, with consequences which no one can foresee. For Russian military power is a factor which every great State will in the future have to take into account. But that concerns the future alone and is merely mentioned as a third alternative development of the Slav peoples. What matters is that we are dealing to-day with a mighty people which has attained to self-consciousness, is aware of itself

ENDS AND MEANS

and has come to know something of its own tremendous potency. Here as elsewhere it may fairly be said that the recorded history of the past is a better guide alike to the possible and probable course of future events in the political sphere than the sympathies of the philanthropist or the cloud castles of the ideologues. And it is upon the firm ground of past experience that the diplomatist must keep his feet whilst he seeks to weave the network of relations which will bind the nations in common concord.

On those terms he will see in Russia not a phenomenon without precedent, but the genesis of an old and recurrent process, the movement from the primitive, the communal form to the more complex mode of a high and progressive civilization, a movement swifter than usual because of her command of applied science. It is the course of growth and expansion of large human communities, caught up, though late, by the whirling wheels of change. There will be repercussions, influences and counter-influences, but that the world is going 'Bolshie' is improbable. And the historic individualism of the Anglo-Saxon tribes will almost certainly repel the infection and resist the attraction of the Russian movement. For the Briton is not a communistic person. The social dramatists and novelists may satirize his insularity, detachment, tolerance, compromising temper, but these have made him a sure guide through the political jungle and it is likely that he will retain them to the end.

BASIC CHANGES

THE theological basis of world order no longer dominates the intellectual classes. Natural law and natural catastrophes, economic progress and economic disasters, the rule of luck, the dread of mischance, these form the background whence arise the hopes and fears of modern men. Theology being bypassed, Science has been called in as an explanation of phenomena, an instrument of control. The triumphs of the new instrument are amazing, the limits of those triumphs are being glimpsed, the attendant costs are now being investigated. The scientist handles matter more successfully than ever; chemistry is an unending series of revelations, but in politics he has done little better than his forerunner the priest. For men are wilful creatures and will not do as they ought.

Granted that the Faith no longer rules Europe, what is the alternative? Men must create some other system of thought around which they can build their personal and collective life, or adapt themselves to a world in which power is the only defence against aggression. They have reason who say that this is nothing new, has always been the real basis of every political structure. But there has at least been an admission that a law existed superior to all the logic of expediency. This is now denied in word and in fact. That this is the final judgment of mankind is doubtful, but for the present the defender of faith and morality is in a beleaguered fortress.

To succeed in their purpose, to conserve the faith, these guardians of the heritage must reconsider their theory of life in the light of proved knowledge. For the substance of religious belief has been challenged. During two centuries men have been uncovering the foundations, stripping away

BASIC CHANGES

the surplus accretions. Now the conclusions of the student, the objective thinker, have been translated into physical facts. The guns sweep the lands clear of ancient errors, pierce and tear the veils that hung between man and the nature of things. Theology has been displaced by humanism, in thought a pathetic futility, in action a benevolent civism, hoping and enduring all things.

The change has been rapid but not sudden. Science had long been encroaching on the realm of faith. Organized religion had controlled men, not by positive law but by intellectual authority, the pressure of manners, the weight of moral counsels. That control had been of great service to the society, helping to weld the nation into a unity. Fission there was, division between the sects, in Britain as elsewhere (three hundred religions and only one sauce, in Voltaire's famous gibe), but the unity was deeper than the difference. Yet because the authority was so strong, rebellion was sure to come. Hope of fame, dislike of rule, desire for all knowledge, urged the student to explore the arcana of the temple. He succeeded beyond his hopes. Whether Gibbon and Strauss and Renan and Loisy are right, or whether the work of Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, Cheyne and a host of others, not to speak of the fine web of argument woven by the subtle mind of Newman and his followers, has filled the dyke, morticed the walls, will long be the theme of debate. Certain it is that an important piece of work has been accomplished, the final results of which no one can foresee, and the impression produced on the European mind is not in doubt: the bonds have been loosened. Revelation no longer commands. The modern mind may play with the religious sentiment. It is no longer overwhelmed by the religious mystery. Life goes on, customs continue, churches exist, the faithful support them, the masses tolerate them, even use them, but they no longer dominate the scene. There has been no revolution in the dramatic manner, no persecution based on dogma; the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

revolutions are economic, the persecutions are political and in the Anglo-American lands these have been absent. Nor have there been agonizings of the soul, torments of the spirit, such as made the groundwork of literature in the early nineteenth century. All that belongs to the romantic period, by now a matter of history and academic theses.

Without a revolution there has been a change. God, Providence, Heaven and Hell, have faded from the foreground of life, slipped into the shadows. Whether this is to be permanent none can say. New prophets may arise, but their name is as yet unknown. For the man seeking guidance the positive sciences hold the field. And it is here that the conflict between the old and the new is likely to be sharp. For the man of religious temper, and he is as real as any other, wishes to know both how and why things happen. And Science can tell him nothing of the Why. Men wish to know what ought to be in the world and Science can only tell them what is. The tension between the dream and reality is dissolved, by surrender of the dream.

These things have long been known to intellectual leaders both at home and abroad. We have been living in a house from which the ancestral portraits and the ancient records have been removed. Yet the men who carry most weight in council are often strongly attached to some religious faith. The outsider may regard this as but another example of the national hypocrisy. And he would be wrong. The probable explanation is that the Englishman is fundamentally religious. Aware of the trend of opinion amongst the intellectuals, casual or indifferent in the performance of his religious duties, he prefers, when he thinks of it at all, the religious to the irreligious theory of life. Logical atheism, proclaimed as a gospel, makes no appeal to him. He is on the side of the angels. The English people will not make a final breach with their history, nor surrender their conviction that the God of all the earth shall do right.

BASIC CHANGES

The causes of this partial eclipse of religious authority are known. One of them is the indirect effect of criticism applied to historical evidence. Mining and countermining have gone on, attack and defence, the technicalities of which are of course known only to the professionals, but the general effect of which has been to produce a dubiety of mind, a hesitancy of utterance and a confused uncertainty amongst those who are aware of the process. To the historian and the humanist were added the men of science. Survival by selection, struggle for life and all the synonyms for the idea have entered into the common stock of human thought. And the democratic masses know it, understand some of its implications and conduct themselves accordingly. Mr. Ernest Bevin, typical leader, recently declared that he had made a study of comparative religions. It was not a boast but a statement. The teachings of the historian and the biologist have been absorbed. The leaders of labour, amongst the best of our citizenry, but no less ambitious than their political opposites, are as well aware as the Bishops and the Professors of the changes in thought on the great themes brought about by the new knowledge. The giants of the nineteenth century described the situation, the men of to-day are drawing the inferences. And some of their conclusions are not such as the Victorians foresaw or would have wished to be made the basis of conduct.

For in the new world belief in personal immortality has gone, individual importance has been reduced to zero, even the heroes and the great are but shadows; love is an erotic impulse, fading at its best into happy companionship; even the arts and sciences, if probed for their values, rank with the spider's web and the bird's nest; the pledged word is a social convenience and pity and sympathy are the offspring of an egoistic fear. Yet the leaders see that judgments must be made, distinctions must be maintained or civilization falls to pieces. Hence the dilemma of to-day for civilized man,

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

seeking firm ground for his convictions. We must think of man as an entity, though we know him for a transient phantom; his word as sacred though it be but breath, and his work as precious, enduring, though it disappears like snow. To sidetrack the religion and to keep the ethic is the formula of the time, but it does not satisfy the mind. And this explains why the modern man finds himself at home again in the intellectual atmosphere of Ecclesiastes and the book of Job. For him, too, the old questions are reopened, and he suspects there may be no answer. The cosmic process goes on, he takes his small part in the pageant and wonders what it means. He may be Koheleth; at moments of release he may even be Omar with the wine cup and the maid; or he may be the troubled Patriarch debating with himself the ancient problems; but assuredly he is not the blithe optimist who knows that he has found the truth and the way.

CHAPTER XVIII

DIVISION OF POWERS

IN recent years the churches have been rather neglected. Priests and parsons were left with many empty benches. A new generation had arisen, determined to enjoy life, not to be bored, to make use of the instruments, the conveniences, the money won by their now vanishing predecessors. It did not occur to these fortunate persons that they might be setting an example, that the masses might follow their social leaders. Still less had they suspected that a neglected priesthood can be dangerous, since it may turn from those who despise it to those who seek leaders, and find in them the source of a new authority, exactly as their apostolic prototypes in the ancient Roman world. The gospel was then preached to the poor, to the enslaved, and the successor of the Fisherman came to sit on the throne of the Caesars. This is not to impugn the sincerity of 'impatient parsons', but to recognize that you cannot relegate to insignificance a body of men, capable, instructed, and devoted as any in the world, without some protest on their part. The new generation should have known that whatever the intellectual changes in the approach to religion may have been, the priestly element in human life is enduring. The form may change but the spirit remains, and there will always be those whose flaming indignation or tender compassion makes them champions of the oppressed, succourers of the wretched, and intermediaries between man and God.

The proof of this we have before our eyes. Once more the Church, speaking through its official hierarchy, has proclaimed the gospel to the poor. But this time it has refrained from promising felicity for all in a realm beyond the stars. Instead it has demanded a more equitable division of the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

goods of this world. They who have enjoyed luxury are to have their pleasures curtailed, and the companions of misery are to share in the joys of life. That here too the element of illusion enters unwittingly into the picture may be taken for granted. Not all the zeal of the reformer can permanently level the varying altitudes of the social structure. Inequalities are part of the fabric of human life, inevitably engendered by the different endowments and changing circumstances of men. But their severities can be mitigated by wisdom, and charity can heal the wounds which human ignorance and impotence have made. And the priesthood which ventures upon this task, becomes the organ voice of the unhappy, must be reckoned with as a power.

Something of this has penetrated the consciousness of those who officially regulate the thought and life of the British people. And even amongst the intellectuals there has been a change of tone, arising from no lightness of mind, but from the sudden imminence of the tragic in what had seemed to be a purely abstract discussion. Those guests of Baron de Holbach who remembered the easy talk, the bold speculations, around his hospitable board, may have felt the same when they heard the tumbrils rolling to the guillotine. Officially religion is now treated with respect, its influence recognized, and the citizen may, if he will, have moral exhortation and earnest preaching brought to his fireside in ample quantities. Here is an agency potent for good if rightly used. But there must be a clear apprehension of the position. The ministrant at this new altar must realize that many of his hearers are intellectually alien from him, whilst not emotionally hostile. He must speak to their intelligence whilst not abusing their tolerant sympathy. And he must remember that for the mass of mankind the grand dogmas have disappeared, not consciously but from the infiltration of new notions, fresh aspects of things born of the age, the social milieu in which he lives. The critical mind has done its work, the apologist must now

DIVISION OF POWERS

seek, amidst what remains, the materials for positive and constructive teaching.

Against one thing, however, the religious apologist, seeking to win the allegiance of democracy, must be on guard. He must not arrogate priestly control in regions where his writ does not run. The epitaph of an eighteenth-century bishop reads 'he was an enemy of all enthusiasm'. Strange eulogy for one of the company of Peter and Paul. Yet such words might be used of one who had learned, like Lucretius, of what great evils religion may be the cause, if not tempered by tolerance and graced with humility. And if religion is to be not only the consolation of the afflicted and the hope of the despairing, but the regulator of men's actions in their industrial and political life, to decide hours of labour, rate of wages, measure of profit and conditions of the market, the consequences for religion may be far other than are hoped for. Priestly control in secular things is no new phenomenon, but its results have seldom been such as wise men would desire to see repeated. The bishop who disliked enthusiasm had probably heard of the Fifth Monarchy men and the Rule of the Saints, when everything in life was brought under the watchful eye of the devotee and a rabid fanaticism dominated the lives of Englishmen. In reaction from that tyranny, men came to regard emotional fervour as one of the graver menaces to social security and well being.

Looking back we can see the misdirected charity of the monasteries filling the roads and fields with idle wanderers. The monasteries themselves, intended originally to be houses of prayer and pious industry, had become, in many instances, homes for idlers and tipplers. The medieval theory and practice which created these institutions also regulated the wages, fixed the profit, declared the price of goods, decided hours of labour, helped through its agents to make and administer the law, sought by inheritance and bequest to increase its own wealth and power, and became at last such

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

a nuisance to the nation that dissolution and confiscation were necessary to destroy the system.

One of the most fruitful of all discoveries in the management of great societies has been that of the severance between the spiritual and the secular power. Most of the ills of religion, about which men have complained so bitterly, arose from the confusion of these two great forces. Religion then became the instrument of the political artist, with disastrous results for religion. It would be a major calamity if mankind were once more to unite the two. And there is the possibility, even in Britain, that something like this may be attempted. Should this happen it will probably be brought about by persons actuated by the highest motives, earnest in promoting the welfare of the masses, quite unaware of those effects of fructifying causation about which Spencer was properly concerned when contemplating the proceedings of the modern legislator.

For it must be admitted that religion, being granted authority over men's secular actions, has often been a menace to their real welfare. And this is not peculiar to any one form of faith. Protestantism may have something medicinal in its own teaching, offering a remedy for the evils of fanaticism. Romanism may accentuate the evils of unrestricted religious authority. Yet the Protestant Sects have too often interfered with the free development of the individual. Some of the ugliest forms of bigotry have been manifested in America, religious espionage, theological excommunication, and public contempt for unpopular opinions. Born of priestly dominance, they are evils for ever threatening the society which allows religious control over secular affairs. And if they could flourish in America as they once did in Britain, from which men fled to escape them, it might suggest that democracy is not immune from the virus of tyranny, when the spiritual power invades the realm of the secular. It is not for Convocation or the Assembly, but for the Legislature to

DIVISION OF POWERS

prescribe social obligation, the duties of the citizen; to restrain the monopolist, to enforce contracts, and to preserve the liberties of its members. And the friends of religion may well view with apprehension the efforts of an impatient priesthood to make their own interpretation of spiritual counsels the measure and norm of all human conduct.

These things, the impact of science and history upon the central citadel of the faith, not to mention the changes in manners and habits for which the cinema and the motor car are responsible, might suggest not only that organized religion is now in the doldrums, but that the authority of Christianity will soon become a nullity. There are those who for these reasons would despair of Jerusalem and join their ancestral brethren by the wailing wall. But this would be an erroneous conclusion. It may well be that Christianity is the final religion, that the ideas of the faith go as far as is possible in the formulation of altruistic sentiments, that sympathy and compassion for the broken and the helpless cannot be better expressed than in the major teachings of Christianity, and that the tragic element in human life cannot be more adequately symbolized than in the Christian doctrine of the Cross. Some of its critics have fallen into the common error of supposing that to give a credible explanation of its origins is equivalent to an evisceration of its power. Their watchword has been: we do not attack, we explain, and they have been surprised and shocked to discover that the steeples and the belfries have not crumbled before their analysis of the agencies which produced them.

Yet they need not have marvelled. Christianity has seen some dark days in its history and has made some remarkable recoveries. It must have had some escapes in the ancient world, when the small communities were struggling against the Mithraic and other cults, with little prospect of success. The Renaissance might well have shaken it, and the Lutheran revolt within its borders might well have seemed its death

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

warrant. Yet the Catholic and the Protestant form alike lived on, and even the cool judgment of the eighteenth century had to confess that there was life and health in Wesley's fervour and, later still, that the dreaming spires of Oxford had again become the scene and source of religious inspiration when Newman shook the English mind by passing from Canterbury to Rome. Thinking of these things, the man interested in religion, whilst recognizing that scholarship and science and changed customs have made hay of some cherished ideas and changed the mood of contemporary thought about Christianity, will not take this as final or despair of a recovery. Rome still stands and will probably stand for thousands of years to come, with her spiritual legionaries, her physicians of the soul and her 'infallibility' where so many men are doubtful. Anglicanism has her institutions and formularies, incomparable of their kind; Presbyterianism is rooted in the polity of the Scottish nation, and the Free Churches, if they retain their tradition, may again be one of the great voices of England, breathing reverence in the presence of the Unseen but critical of all the withes with which secular Governments seek to bind free men.

The trouble is that if we are dealing with religion, as apart from politics, though there may be much dissatisfaction and even distress at the present situation, there is no satisfactory alternative to Christianity. The field is already occupied, the institutions there. To say that there are no alternatives to Christianity is not to say that there are no candidates for the position. Setting aside the competing religions, the gnosticisms, theosophies and astrologies, one may take the line of thought opened up by two able men as alternatives to organized Christianity. Mr. H. G. Wells declares that the scale and speed of the changes now occurring are so great, the insurgence of rebellious youth so vigorous, that only by a complete re-education of the human race can humanity be saved from the threat of extinction. There is a race on

DIVISION OF POWERS

between education and catastrophe and the time is short. Perhaps the men accustomed to read books, who have some view of the past as well as of that future with which Mr. Wells is so familiar may be excused for a mild incredulity; perhaps others may remember Taine's remark concerning the Commune that there is a great deal of ruin in a civilization; and others may have a suspicion that the human race has already suffered much from the people who are so anxious to take care of it and might be none the worse for being left to its own devices for a time, having a singular faculty for managing to survive the worst calamities and to appear again even when it might seem that air, fire and water had done their best to finish it off. But it cannot be denied that the preacher of the Coming Doom is in earnest, and his theory of universal schooling for the whole human race, along the most modern scientific lines, with new books and fresh mechanical appliances pouring from the workshops in ever greater profusion for the unfortunate and distracted pupils in this universal Lightning Educational Institute, must be kept in mind. It is another string and men may use it, or they may not.

Mr. Aldous Huxley is equally dissatisfied with the results of Christianity and especially that Bronze Age book, the Old Testament, but his proposals are more modest. He would find salvation for the race in the development of personal detachment from the world, first for the individual, then for groups of not more than twenty, such groups becoming the redemptive centres from which would radiate the new thought and life by which humanity might be spiritually revitalized. Mr. Huxley is a capable, observant man who looks at the world through no rose-tinted spectacles, and what he says is always much more worth attending to than the echoes from the groundlings repeated to us by the popular publicists of the time. But the most resolute optimist might feel some dismay at being presented with the task of saving mankind by the process of non-attachment and the cultivation

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

of spirituality through the practice of Yoga-like exercises. And the blunt truth is that, with few exceptions, European man will have nought to do with this form of thought or practice, so that as an alternative to Christianity it is not really impressive. Yet it is as good as another.

In spite of all that the intelligent rebel can say or do, humanity at large seems to need religion. The multitude is made up of men who do not willingly stand alone, finding the world a threatening and chilly home without the comfort of some hope for the future, and the companionship of their fellows. And then there are always the poor. Relative poverty, mankind is not likely to escape. For there will always be differences. And relative poverty, the difference between just enough and the abundance granted to the fortunate, will probably remain. And so with ignorance and incompetence, inability to meet the claims of the world, this too is one of the permanent realities. And those who feel themselves incapacitated for the struggle, who are always missing the boat, will need that which religion alone can give. Nectar of roses, drowsy poppy or mandragora, it may dull the edge of their self-reproach, enable them to endure the present and to contemplate the future without despair.

Nor will the governments of the world, whatever may be the changes in the form of rulership, easily dispense with this aid to quiet living amongst men. Napoleon had little of it but knew the need that others felt and acted in accord with a statesman's judgment. Lenin thought the world had finished with faith, but his followers found it useful, and will need its aid as the pattern of their communal life becomes clearer. And when peoples and governments are agreed that religion has its part to play in human life, helps to keep the current of existence smooth and clear, there is little need to suppose that religion is likely to cease from out the land.

How will it revive? No one can say. But one may hazard the suggestion that the revitalizing of religion will not this

DIVISION OF POWERS

time be through appeal to the emotions alone, but rather by an apologetic which will justify religious belief against a world which seems bent on denying man's dearest hopes. Such an apologetic will make the way, if not plain, at least discernible to patient eyes. Not in the heavy tomes of the philosophers, not even in the generalizations educed by the scientific thinker, speculating in the intense inane; but some pregnant summary of the thought of this distracted age, some statement by the Pascal or Butler of our time may make religion intelligible to the cultivated man and not utterly inaccessible to the average mind. Then once more it may be said of the religious man's ideas and beliefs: you may not agree, but you cannot despise them.

CHAPTER XIX

REMAKING

THE planners have laid their grip upon the world. The results no one can foresee, least of all the men who have thus undertaken to mould anew an ancient nation. Their confidence is unbounded, but serene assurance of one's own infallibility is not the same as a reasoned judgment. Control of human destiny has passed from the medieval monk to the practitioner in chemistry, the chairman of committee, and the master of the crowd. Whether the victim will always be submissive no one can say. He has few champions who are not already hired by the Societies and Corporations proposing to order the world anew, yet here and there one may catch the accents, almost a prayer, of the meek and lowly murmuring: 'Let us alone, Time driveth onward fast and in a little while our lips are dumb, let us alone'.

Indeed if one listened closely one might interpret the uncertain sounds to some such effect as: I am the common ordinary man, about whom we hear so much, and all that I ask for is the right to live in my own way, harming none and claiming little from others, save that they shall not harm me. My teachers, self-appointed and so numerous to-day, tell me that I am born into a family numbering some forty-five millions, that my activities must be directed towards the elaboration of the life of this family, in which endeavour I shall find full satisfaction and completion of my personality, not in itself impressive but of some importance to me. I like my country, would fight for it if called upon; taxes I pay with the usual delays and groushings; and I try to keep the law, pretty complicated these days, and to help the family along, though I do find it hard to keep up an active interest in all of the forty-five millions who make up the little circle.

REMAKING

But I wish the leaders and teachers would understand that I rather pride myself on being an independent person, a human creature standing on his own two feet, with likings and limitations of my own, which I know pretty well by now. Of course I know there must be rules, but for choice I like to work on my own, choose my time and place, and rest when inclined, always without asking anything from anybody; and this endless effort to treat me as though I were a nincompoop incapable of looking after my own affairs becomes very annoying. Without any disrespect to parliament and the clever fellows who talk there I should not be heartbroken if they were to turn their attention away from me and mine, allowing me to enjoy the unusual experience of being not a mechanized robot or a punching ball or a subject for dissection under the knife, but a man and a citizen.

Men are talking of the creation of a world State. Are they to be taken seriously? If so there are some questions to be asked before the project becomes the theme and purpose of propaganda and a crusade. Has any State ever been *made*, in the sense in which these theorists seem to use the term? It is doubtful. The peculiar quality which marks every great assemblage of human beings working together under one leadership as a nation is that of growth. It is an organism, which, proceeding from a nucleus, an embryo, gradually expands itself, absorbs into itself other constituents, spreads itself from the centre, usually slowly, and the slower in proportion to its size and the intensity of its organic life, and develops itself under the pressure of circumstance and the drive of the inner urge, through long periods of time. Modern France was a thousand years building itself up, Britain has been as long, and when Hamilton, Jefferson, and Washington undertook to create a nation in the West they already had the seed plot of a country which they had won by the sword, whilst they knew that behind the strip of land

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

they had conquered there were vast stretches of soil directly contiguous, through which could pour the new populations until they stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast. And if we say that Bismarck made modern Germany it must be remembered that the material was there, more or less plastic, under his hand; a people discontented because of their sense of weakness, kingdoms and rulers jealous of each other and of Prussia to such a degree that Bismarck's success was to be attributed to his skilful playing off of the envies of the fragments until they were caught in his net and compelled to join or be conquered and die. And even then later events might justify the suspicion that the unifying was premature, since instead of being a unity of equal parts it resulted in the subjection of all to one dominant fraction of the whole.

Let it be granted that the work of the diplomatists is of immense importance, that they do bridge chasms, smooth sharp angles, bring the stones of the structure near to each other and juxtapose them with some show of constructional art; but let it not be supposed that a nation is like a brick wall, or even the Escorial or the Parthenon. A nation, a State, is something alive: like the individual man it will bleed if wounded, and in so far as it lives it has resilience, recuperative powers, energies of growth, of resistance, which refuse to submit themselves wholly to the hand of any artist or practitioner. If the world state ever comes it will be by a process proportioned in time to the duration of smaller communities, which puts it far beyond the ken of any man now living. And it might be well to leave it there.

But there is a further question — do men want the World State? One knows the picture in the minds of these projectors; a small city built on the upper slopes of the Atlas or the Himalayan mountains, a chamber devoted to the consultations of the ten or twenty ruling figures in the world; the going and coming of these persons, seen flashing through the twilight to and from their place of assembly, where the

REMAKING

fate of continents and nations is to be decided in brief consultations by the scientific or political heads of the respective peoples. From those dizzy heights above the world the rulers look down upon the masses of mankind, toiling in hygienic factories, playing in well-appointed recreation fields, manufacturing, trading, demolishing and constructing their various ant-hills according to scheduled directions and rules. It is the immense human ant-heap, over which, as the means of securing obedience and discreet conduct there hover the giant planes, carrying bombs which can shatter half a city, manned by the polite guardians of the peace, the policemen of the new world. And the scientist with his massive brow, and the politician with his eloquent mouth, will be secure in their aerial tabernacle amongst the snows, near to the stars, as they discuss and decide how the multitude may best be drilled, employed, entertained, for the peace of the world and to the glory of the rulers.

Surely there is something to be said for the other side of the picture, the world as we have known it, even with the hateful interruption of war, the world in which men feel that they count for something, though they be but small men, because they belong to a village, a clan, a country. Where men can formulate their own ideas of how they should be governed, where Russian communist and American individualist can squabble over their respective notions, and men of intermediate shades of opinion, from brightest red to sombre black, can join in the endless debate, without feeling that they are in danger of being shot to pieces or that they are blaspheming against the spirit of life. Where men can feel that they are men and not the blind automata who must obey the same word, sing the same song and seek to approximate to the same uniform obedience and civic respectability which these new and harsher Puritans would impose upon mankind.

In planning for the future, either for the nation or for the

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

world, it must be understood men can only plan for what they can control. The shopkeeper cannot plan for distribution of goods unless he can be sure of goods from the vendor, and he can have no assurance of this unless his credit is sound and there is sufficient competition to make it worth the vendor's while to supply him. Nor will the municipality plan roads, transport routes and drains until it has secured financial or statutory control of the area through which the new roads are to run. If Britain is to live and labour under a planned economy, there must obviously be an extension of Government control over all sections of the national life and industry which may impinge upon or lie within the compass of the planned scheme. If the Yorkshire and Lancashire mill owners desire to stand out of the scheme, for reasons which seem to them good, then compulsion will of necessity be exercised upon them and liberty of production and of sale must disappear.

Historically the method of long-term planning is not that which has been followed by the British people. They have often been taunted with the habit of 'muddling through', which means that they do not care for schemes prepared *in vacuo*, prefer to take each problem as it arises and have a genius for dealing with the concrete issue, the immediate question. It is easy to turn this into ridicule, especially on those occasions when the soldier finds himself, without reserves, confronting an enemy entrenched and fortified; or the financiers are confronted with a crisis which they have not foreseen; or the politicians are perplexed by something unexpected and wait for a lead. Yet the nation managed to scramble through the Boer war, and a moratorium has been found effective, and when Parnell upset the applecart with his divorce Gladstone found a way out of the confusion just as did Baldwin over the Abdication difficulty. And if winning wars and avoiding bankruptcy and keeping the King's Government going are the real test of tactics, some-

REMAKING

thing may be said for a method which seems to suit our people and which so far has avoided the major disasters by which so many nations have been ruined.

These characteristics of the British, respect for the local, the national ethos; and a preference for dealing with particular problems as they arise are not without meaning for those who would fashion anew the political fabric of Europe. For there, too, in the purely secular field, the core of the question is the limitation or extension of powers, the meaning of sovereignty. At present the disposition is to regard national sovereignty as a phrase, a verbalism of small importance in the presence of those forces which really give control, scientific knowledge, hoarded wealth and military might. The map makers are prepared to sketch the outlines of the new Europe in terms of conciliar agreement, along lines laid down by a deliberative assembly, acting with the authority born of victory in war. That assembly will be made up of men who have emerged from the strain of conflict wearied but triumphant, anxious only for a settlement which may endure. There will be others desirous of using the opportunity to fashion a Europe which accords with their notions of what Europe ought to be. If democracy is to prove its ability to make peace as it has waged war, its representatives must display a wisdom and discretion rare enough in the annals of mankind.

Whoever undertakes to help in this task must clear his mind of some possible preconceptions. This is not merely a platform offered to those whose one remedy for all human ills is 'getting together'. Nor are they merely concerned with a grand 'merger' in the style of 'big business'. Europe has been the chief breeding ground of what is precious in human life for two thousand years. One of the chief reasons of its vitality, its richness of life, has been the friction engendered by the contiguity of its different elements, the fissures which divide as well as the bridges which unite the peoples and

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

cultures of the continent. To flatten out these differences, to make of Celt and Latin, Teuton and Norseman and Slav one common type, either by conquest, conversion or convention, might bring peace, but it would be the peace of the cemetery. In a well governed city, says the Chinese proverb, there is confusion but there is no disorder. To prevent the disorder whilst allowing the confusion incident to life will be the task of those who would remake Europe.

For Europe has a variety of character not found elsewhere in the world. Geography, climate, history, migrations of peoples, religious controversies, wars and the influence of potent personalities, soldiers and statesmen, scholars and artists, have all contributed to make the rich human compost to be found there. The men of the new lands, hitherto little disturbed by war, free from the friction produced by pressure of numbers, may feel irritation and disgust as they watch the struggling human heap where all the miseries as well as the glories of humanity seem concentrated. But these natural emotions are not the groundwork of a sound judgment. For that there must be understanding, knowledge, some apprehension of the forces which have gone to the making of the Europe we know. Nor will it be sufficient to think and speak of making something entirely new. In any event that is impossible. If the European world is to live and flourish after the war, it must do so in continuity, a vital thing growing out of the old, neither wrenched from its roots nor crushed by a superincumbent force.

Because this is necessary the theme of federation will need to be broached with care. To federate national entities is difficult, for the task implies dealing with living men, curbing strong passions, masking prejudices, softening old antipathies in the furtherance of a common purpose. To succeed such federation ought to spring from the wishes of the people concerned and not to be clamped upon them from outside. With some practice in self-government, some kinship of

REMAKING

tradition, with a tolerant sympathy for differences of thought and practice, the attempt may succeed. These qualities are not common anywhere, and neither the Netherlands nor the Balkans have been fruitful ground for them. Federation supposes a Constitution to regulate relations between the different States. This must be explicit or it will not serve, yet the more explicit and definite the wording the greater the risk that it may come to restrict the activity and growth of each State. Formulas become rigid whilst circumstances change, rules die of dry rot, and the most lucid exposition of principles may cease to be applicable to altered conditions. Even with a single people united by blood, race, language, and tradition, it is difficult to legislate for the future. In a Federation it is not easier. Out of these things would come a new Order of the Robe, conferences between representatives; the differences, contentions, delays inseparable from committees, none of which may be fatal but all injurious to rapid decision and concerted action. Little knowledge of local government is required to understand how hard it is to reconcile conflicting interests and divergent desires with unity of purpose and free co-operation. Yet without these, or without a Federal law which can at need be imposed by force on all, the task of government is extremely difficult.

Probably some form of regional federation will be worked out, with the consent of the parties concerned, the smaller communities being allied with each other where the conditions permit. Some limit will be imposed upon the right of self-determination, but where a State is recognized as a unity and an entity, sovereignty must be conceded. And with sovereignty goes the right to make treaties, raise an army for defence and to wage war. What must be accepted, if democracy is to be realist in its outlook, is that no legislation, no regrouping of the different powers, can guarantee the different peoples of Europe against the possibility of friction, dissension and war.

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

The chief source of danger will still lie in the German people. When Germany has lost this war, admitting the fact without qualification, she will still remain a great nation, with the will to control her own destiny. What internal changes may take place no one can say, but it should be assumed that the German Reich will remain, a society ravaged by internal dissension but united as against external foes. It is not likely, even if it were desirable, that Germany will split into separate kingdoms, that the work of Bismarck will be undone. Nor should any of the current notions about a sudden change in the spirit of a great people cloud the judgment of the victors. A great people does not reject its history, repudiate its triumphs, repent of its errors overnight, like a roué grieving over a night's debauch. And though defeated they will have much on which to reflect with pride. In a quarter of a century, they have twice challenged and fought the rest of the world and have come near to success. Her people will not forget this. Is it said that her armies must be disbanded, her factories, mills and mines destroyed? However completely this may be done the situation thus created cannot be permanent. Or is it said that the new generation of German youth must be re-educated in the humanities, taught the virtues of peace, the ethics of kindness? And British and American instructors are to take over this task, working upon it for ten or twenty years! What would be the attitude of German youth to this tutorial fraternity? Rebellion at heart, with polite deference to their instructors, and the revival of all those societies, confraternities of youth, in which, ever since Jena, Germany has been so rich.

What then is the course the victors should follow? Accept the fact that in the centre of Europe there will remain a great nation with a strong predilection for war. And be prepared to meet the danger whenever it threatens. Such preparation will imply the resurgence of France, the forging of new bonds

REMAKING

of alliance between her and Britain, possibly the re-creation of Austria as a national unit extending far beyond Vienna and its environs, the presence of Russia in Europe as a force working for a long peace, since she has so much to do in her own country and needs time and peace for development there, and above all a Britain warned, alert, armed against all perils.

It will be said that this is but to revive the old Balance of Power, which is true, but with a difference. The old idea was that you matched kings and statesmen and their followers against each other, the new situation is that the nations are themselves self-conscious, aware of their perils and, through their representatives, seek those alliances which will benefit them. Frederick could do almost as he willed with his Pomeranian grenadiers, Bismarck could play the great game with some certainty that his men would move at command, though he had many an anxious hour, but the modern statesman must move with his people or not at all. Had Hitler not been the spokesman of the ambitions, griefs and angers of the German people he could have done little. To-day it is not the statesman who makes this balance, he does but recognize it, give it form. The nations themselves create it, or rather it is born of their needs, their situation at the moment. Britain and America, China and Russia are at the moment allies not because their leaders desire it, but because it is plain to everybody that unless they adopt this role they are in danger of destruction. The Balance of Power is then always with us and the democratic peoples must accept this fact. Usually it is but an unstable equilibrium, there is nothing fixed or final in this world, least of all in politics, but as long as the equilibrium is maintained there is a measure of security.

Indeed all the Leagues and Alliances are but examples of this balance. For inevitably when the major, the greater, nations align themselves on one side or the other, the smaller

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

units tend to gravitate towards that side which their needs, desires, inclinations lead them to favour and the balance is thus created again. Was the League of Nations itself anything but a particular case of the Balance of Power? At one moment it did seem that the desired end had been achieved. The forces enrolled in the League were so overwhelming that the small community left out might have seemed no more than the fly on the wheel. But this was soon changed. Other agencies were at work.

Why did the League fail? Some would blame America for this, forgetting that no politician has the right to pledge his country to a problematical and potentially dangerous policy until he has received a direct mandate to that effect, which had not been granted to Wilson. Even had America been in she could not have compelled others to be true to their bond. Japan, Italy, Germany desired to use the League for their own ends. Finding this impossible they withdrew and became its secret or avowed enemies. Then there was the absence of any compulsive force by which the decisions of the League could have been made effective, so that the League was like a policeman without a baton.

To these must be added, as Mr. Carl Becker has shown, those causes inherent in the negative purpose of the League: to prevent particular wars; the assumption that it is always to the major interest of a nation to avoid war, which is not true; and — the vital point — the fact that political power is not transferable, giants and dwarfs not being interchangeable entities, but each being what he is and no more.

Behind these there is the conscious pursuit, by each member of the fraternity, of national self-interest, a persistent element, a constant, in all world politics; and these things being recognized, there is nothing inexplicable in the failure of this brave attempt to organize mankind for peace. And then there is always the merely human stratum in this cross-section of political geology, the fact that human tempers got

REMAKING

frayed, that important persons felt they were not getting their share of attention, whilst less important persons suspected that the good things were not allowed to come their way.

These things would happen, not because these were wicked men, but because they were not in themselves extraordinary, being only slightly enlarged photographs of the average man, who always behaves like this save under the stress of some grand emotion or imminent crisis, when he may for a moment become heroic. Geneva might be for a time the light and hope of the world, but when the miracles did not happen and custom had staled the novelty of the scene the glow faded and men fell back upon the thoughts and acts of common day.

If then in any future alignment of the nations similar conditions prevail it is reasonable to expect similar consequences. If Germany and Japan and possibly Italy, with any satellites that may gather round them, are to be regarded as nations under tuition, in a state of pupillage, or as permanently hostile to the members of the Allied Powers, then there will be a gradual approach to each of the opposing sections by those smaller nations whose sympathies or whose interests seem likely to be best satisfied by relations with one or the other. The discontents arising from unfulfilled expectations, from promises not kept, from the usual misunderstandings between suppliant and benefactor in diplomatic intercourse, will all act upon those relations, and there will be a new form of the Balance of Power arising from the alignment of the respective sections. In such a situation the only means for preventing an open breach will be the certainty that the side on which the desire of the peoples is for peace and industrial progress is stronger than that on which the inclinations of the people or the rulers are for war. And some such alignment is the surest way of attaining a long peace, alike in the lands washed by the Atlantic and those on the coasts of the Pacific and Indian seas.

CHAPTER XX

PROSPECTS

If then any attempt is made to create this controlling power it must be made with an intelligence open to instruction from actual experience. There must be no blinking of unpleasant realities, nor any yielding to such illusions as that men love virtue for its own sake. Virtue must make itself strong. The world will need not a Crusade, from Mecca or Moscow, from Washington or London, but a calm calculation of the risks by men skilled in the appraisal of social and political possibilities. For the Crusade, like a wave, has its ebb, the enthusiasm which made it dies down, the great leaders grow sclerotic and their sons are unequal to the burden, and what was once a wild revolt becomes the dull routine of the accepted mode. Then the new generation asks for adventure, claims its right to danger, breaks the ordered procession of the days, eager to meet the uncertain, the unknown. Therefore the wise leaders, dismissing the verbalism of those for whom nothing is valuable which is not eternal, will be content to make a good peace, on which their successors may build.

There are moments when the modest citizen might wish his counsellors to realize that we are a moderately intelligent people, well aware that silk purses are not made out of sows' ears, that in fine we can bear the truth, about the present and the future. Our prophets assure us of two things, first that there will be momentous changes after the war, which is probably true. But they forget that even these changes will be conditioned by the presence of the permanent elements in human nature. For example, everyone desires that there shall be no extreme poverty or privation felt by the brave men who have fought for the maintenance of democratic ideas and practices, and that arrangements be

PROSPECTS

made to prevent this. Yet all the Governments in the world cannot guarantee the absence of hardship in every instance, since the men themselves are different and react differently to circumstances. At this moment fortunes are being made by Jews and Greeks and Egyptians in Cairo, where men of all nations foregather to capture the joys of the fleeting hour, with the threat of death not far away. By what legerdemain of the statesman can the prodigal and generous-hearted soldier be assured that when the war is over he will be in as good a position as the waiter who scurries round at his order with drinks and tobacco, who is his servant to-day and may be his employer and master in a few years time? And when orders are scarce and clerks are at a shilling a dozen, who can ensure that the ex-soldier shall be employed at his chosen task and at the wage which contents him? The wind will blow and the shorn lamb will shiver and the shepherd will seek the leeward of the hill for his flock, but the wind will not drop for all his prayers and conjurations and there will be hard cases spite of all his care.

And then the prophets tell us that we are in the youthful days of the world, with infinite time in which to unfold the hidden glories of life. The Baconian notion was that we are the ancients and that the flint and beaker men were the juveniles of Time, which may be true, but the seers who paint our future are certain that we stand on the brink of unimagined possibilities, and become quite dithyrambic in picturing the marvels of the time to come. This also may be fully justified, since no one knows what things have yet to be unveiled. But whilst the temporal duration before the human race may be beyond calculation one thing is certain, that civilizations are born and live for an indefinite time, and that the earth hides the remnants of many which once seemed to have the assurance of perpetuity. This is the commonplace of the archaeologist, of the diggers in old palaces and the tombs of kings. Empires have rotted from internal corruption,

cities and seaports have crumbled because a trade route has been changed, or the desert has invaded the orchards and the gardens, and 'the Lion and the Lizard keep, The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep'. Civilizations are not in themselves eternal and each must keep itself alive by continuous adaptation to varying conditions. Whatever therefore may be done by authority to improve the situation of the citizen, if the past records of our people are to be of any use as guides, and they are the only reputable guides we have, for we travel where no one knows the way, then it is by the free spirit of the individual man, the candid acceptance of the inevitable strains and pressures of life and the effort to resist and subdue them, that the continuance of our society can be assured.

In estimating the probable course of future events, a dangerous proceeding, the wiser method will always be to take what the financiers call a conservative view, the meaning of which is that you tend to write down your assets and write up your liabilities, so that you may be prepared for the worst whilst entirely willing to accept the best, if it comes. In this connection the word has no political connotation, but merely implies the application of common sense and the fruits of experience to questions about which no one has adequate information.

Following this rule we shall not be far wrong in assuming that all important States will seek to augment their population, rather than diminish it, for reasons of national safety; that this will tend to create some pressure on the national means of subsistence, no one knows to what degree; that feeling this pressure there will be a disposition on the part of the strong and important States to expand their boundaries, to desire that which they have not got, even though it be but Naboth's vineyard, and that out of this disposition, which is widespread, there may come future wars. And since future wars are possible, there will be a direct and pressing need for

PROSPECTS

those nations which have large and valuable properties to be in a position to defend them, so that adequate protection must be given. And this can only be done by a highly-trained professional force, active in all mediums, land, sea and air, or a large national army built up by conscription. This is a liability.

If there is to be a new distribution of food, based upon the needs of the respective nations, this will imply a redistribution of lands for the growth of foods, since no nation feeling itself incipiently strong will long be content to depend for its subsistence upon the tolerant good will of the collective peoples. Such a redistribution of lands would certainly mean large claims upon the properties held by the British peoples or those akin to them. Without speaking of the break-up of the Empire, which is not a necessary consequence, it is certain that this must mean a diminution of the territory over which the British flag flies, as also perhaps a similar diminution of the American, and the Russian controlled area, to the advantage and expansion of those nations which benefited by the new partition. The possible acceptance of such an arrangement and its effect must be considered, since it would diminish the assets of the distributing nations and would, to that extent at least, be a liability.

But further, along with the allocation of lands to those less favoured peoples there must also go the transference of population, either to work the land immediately or to form the nucleus of a population which in future years will be able to do this. And it looks as though we are on the edge of a period in which there may be considerable transfers of this nature, either with or without the concurrence of the Governments concerned. For migrations have a trick of looking after themselves, and if there is to be a large migration of the peoples, as is not impossible during the next one or two centuries; if, for instance, the Northern populations of America felt the drive to the South, or if the Russian masses

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

should press on the Germanies for an exit to the South and West, then it is doubtful whether any Governmental decree could stay them. In fine, the question of colonization, which was a problem to the Greeks and the Romans and was solved in their day by positive action; which was a perplexity in the nineteenth century in Britain and was clarified by the free emigration of multitudes to the Americas and the Pacific zones, may again become a serious matter for the British people in the present century. And the old problems will arise: Does the emigrant remain a citizen when he goes abroad? Who is to rule the new populations, the existing masters of the land they have chosen or the masters of the land they have come from? And colonial problems for all the nations and certainly for the British, since they may lead to war and must involve expenditure on arms and men, may well remain a liability.

If then we are to estimate aright the future of Britain we must accept the full measure of her liabilities and set ourselves the task of liquidating them. It has been computed that at the end of the war Britain will have incurred obligations of something like twenty thousand millions sterling; her securities will have been realized and will be represented by national bonds, and her invisible as well as visible exports will have dwindled. In the same strain it is said that to maintain her pre-war standards of living Britain will have to increase her post-war export trade by an estimated 40 to 50 per cent. And on this increase of export trade depends the replacement of her overseas investments and all her hopes of social security, health, housing, education and the rest. And these are the considered utterance of men who are not studying to win the votes of constituents, nor to paint glittering pictures on the curtain of the future, but to keep as close to the fact, the objective reality, as men may, so that there may be an awareness of the truth in the minds of the British people.

PROSPECTS

Here then are the real conditions amidst which after the war the political artist must work. Yet there is little need for the younger generation to be despondent as they contemplate the future. For we have assets which, used with skill and energy, ought to ensure a splendid position for our successors. Our geographical situation, though modified by the aeroplane, is one of the most enviable, with London, the capital, as the port of call between two hemispheres, and her commercialists and financiers rich with an experience and wisdom unsurpassed in the world. If the popular mind and its leaders and teachers will but let these men alone for a time, realize that in any sane imaginable world they and their breed are as necessary and valuable as the wheels to a locomotive or the springs to a watch, there are few complications out of which they cannot find a way for themselves and the nation.

In our workmen we have a body of artisans equal to every demand of industry, capable of producing the finest products light or heavy, in soft fabrics or hard metals, in the world. Textiles, clothing, iron work, wood, the lighter metals, cars, ships, engines, there are few things the British worker cannot make when called upon and, so long as the world needs things like these and is able to pay for them, there should be work for the ordinary British man. And once having got the work, something to do for which other people will pay, the major difficulty is removed; rate of payment, hours of labour, conditions of working and the rest can be settled easily enough by intelligent and reasonable men if the primary thing, work to be done, has once been secured.

And here it is that the manager, contractor, entrepreneur, comes into his own. He has not been treated with much respect in recent years. The opinion of the political intellectuals is that he is a stupid ass or a murderous cut-throat. They are loud in their curses upon him and his works and ask only that he may be removed, and the Workers' Councils

DEMOCRATIC REALISM

or the Shop Stewards or the fourth Under-Secretary to the Ministry of Upkeep be appointed in his place. Yet since, before the war, he contrived to create a business and to make it pay, he may still be allowed to hold his position. And if this is permitted and the officials can be persuaded to let him alone for a time he may once more show his quality. Then you will see that his travellers are in every important centre in the South and East of the world, that they are finding orders in Bangkok or Bagdad or Bombay for the employment of men in Leeds and Middlesbrough, so that by a magic which is startling enough when thought of, the man who has never been beyond his native county can live in decency by supplying goods to the men who live in Agra or on the slopes of the Himalayas. For these managers or bosses, grasping narrow-minded though they be according to all reports, have a queer trick of getting things done, of linking up remote places with Hinckley and Motherwell and Barnstaple, and striping the world's map with lines of communication along which the world's trade can run. And they remain one of the nation's assets.

Once the war is over there will be innumerable things to do and the difficulty will be to decide on priorities. Humanity, exposed for so long to this blizzard, will seek shelter, want food, warmth, clothing, if the worst of war's aftermath is to be avoided. Regulations and controls, necessary for the prosecution of the war, cannot all be removed at a moment's notice, but there should be no doubt or mistake about the purpose in the minds of the people of getting rid of them at the first convenient season. Needed for the people's safety during the time of struggle, they should be regarded strictly as war measures, having no place in the lives of men when the necessity for them has ceased. Otherwise the strife and suffering will have been in vain, for the freedom which has been the goal of the world's effort will have been sacrificed on the altar of the omnipresent and

PROSPECTS

omnipotent State, and the guerdon of man's pain snatched away in the moment of victory. Any concerted effort to maintain these restrictions on the free activity of the peoples, either on grounds of policy or moral advantage, must be strenuously resisted. Weary of dithyrambic apostrophes to liberty, the citizen must claim the speedy restoration of positive and particular liberties; the right to eat and drink freely according to taste; the right to use his own money, for his own advantage in his own way; the right to say what he likes in public or private, short of treason or libel; the right to provide for his own sustenance and shelter; the right to work or play at his own discretion, so long as he does not become chargeable to the taxpayers, and the right to criticize the Government of the day with all the fullness of a vigorous vocabulary and a maturely sceptical intelligence.

And surely the world will have learned its lesson well enough to know that the best way to meet scarcities is to open the ports, to leave trade free to follow its natural routes and to allow the riches of one land to compensate for the poverty of another by the interchange of products to the advantage of all. Doubtless tariffs, customs, excise and the rest may have their place in the economy of mankind, and the arrangements made will demand every kind of skill if the different interests are to be considered and placated; but the broad principle should be clear enough, that the world can only be kept well supplied with the fruits of the earth and the products of industry if the peoples and the legislators lay the emphasis on freedom rather than on restriction in dealing with the world's trade.

It may, then, be concluded that the world is bent on trying democracy on the grand scale. And every sketch of a new order, of foreign or home make, will be considered in the light of this purpose. It is not wise to assume that the intention is bound to be fulfilled, it is irrational to conclude that it is bound to fail. No amount of legislation, no benevolent

paternalism on the part of Governments can make the world safe for democracy. That can only be done by the people themselves, by the individual citizen proving that he is equal to the demands of his new situation, accepting the responsibilities of his position, guarding against every infringement of his rights as an independent member of the commonwealth and fulfilling all the duties which fall upon him as a member, seeking no more than his due and giving in proportion to his ability to the common stock. In a word, without good democrats there can be no safe democracy, and the democrat will become good not by expecting from a political theory more than any political theory can give, but by developing the virtues which in any political system would make of him a useful member of society.

The democrat must be watchful against the peril of anarchy and the breaking up of laws, for anarchy brings confusion and disorder into any system and destroys the best theories by proving that men are not good enough to work them effectively. And equally he must be watchful against a mechanical equality enforced by popular rule, for then he will be covering the volcano, trying to keep the surging spirit of man within the bounds of a theory, compressing human vitality under the leaden weight of system. And humanity will burst the bonds, shake off the incubus and assert its right to freedom.

Either of these will lead to despotism, with some one of the thousand embryonic Caesars in the saddle. There is another road, that of ordered freedom, in which profitable change is accepted whilst spiritual continuity is maintained, differences are treasured, variety of form is valued and the strong seed of the national life allowed to burgeon and bloom in its infinite luxuriance. On this road the British people have travelled far, with profit to themselves and to the world, and, by the avoidance of extremes, may long continue to be the exemplars of mankind.

